RUSSIAN ESSAYS AND STORIES

MAURICE BARING

46.

J. W. Allen

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A Year in Russia

With the Russians in Manchuria

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BY

MAURICE BARING

AUTHOR OF "A YEAR IN RUSSIA" ETC.

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DEDICATED

TO

EVAN CHARTERIS

DEDICATION

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MY DEAR EVAN,—This book, which you expressed a wish I should dedicate to you, consists of short essays and stories dealing entirely with Russian subjects.

These essays (which deal with Russia) are in no sense political. I will not go so far as to say they are uninteresting; such modesty is, as Bacon once pointed out, a gross form of boasting; besides which it is a mistake. If one underrates one's wares one is taken at one's word. I have found this out to my cost. Once when I was competing in a Civil Service Examination, and appeared as a candidate in the German *viva voce*, the German examiner asked me if I could speak German.

"Yes, a little," I answered modestly.

"Oh!" said the examiner, "I will then wish you good morning. I will no doubt have the pleasure of seeing you again the next time there is an examination."

The next time there was an examination and I presented myself again to the German *viva voce* examiner, who happened to be a different man, when he asked me if I could speak German, I replied thus—

"Yes, I speak it as well as Bismarck spoke it, and my written style combines the solidity of Lessing's, the limpidity of Goethe's, and the lightness of touch of Heine's, as you have no doubt observed from my written papers."

"Then I need not trouble you any further," said the examiner. This time I got full marks.

In the last book I wrote, which was also about Russia, there was a preface in which I said that I had no political opinions and that my only object was to give a record of things seen. In spite of this Conservatives said my book was a revolutionary pamphlet, and Liberals—English Liberals of course—Russian Liberals

knew better—declared it was an apology for reaction.[1] What better proof could I have had of its fundamental impartiality? But impartiality is unpopular. People prefer to see dogmatic opinions nailed like a flag to one side or the other; they cannot bear being told that both sides are right—and wrong. They do not much like being told that one is quite indifferent as to what people's political opinions may be, because one is interested in them as human beings. In saying that such impartiality is unpopular, I have greatly understated the question. If one takes an impartial view of certain questions which inspire violent partisanship; if, for instance, one is opposed to vivisection and at the same time one has no sympathy with anti-vivisectionists—if, for instance, one believes in the innocence of Dreyfus, and the Dreyfusards inspire one with disgust, or if, as in this case, one sympathises with the Russian Liberals and yet considers that their apologists in England talk incredible nonsense

[1] The book is at this moment forbidden by the Censorship in Russia.

—it is almost impossible to get a hearing at all. Both sides reject you, because you refuse not to admit that there are weaknesses and a certain measure of right on either side. The partisan cannot bear this to be said. His side must be altogether right, the other side must be altogether wrong; and if you venture to say that such a view is exaggerated and incomplete, you are howled down. People, and especially English people, are extraordinarily sensitive on this score (curiously enough), when a foreign country is in question. They regard every foreign country as being divided into two camps, the angels on one side, the devils on the other. In Russia the angels are all Revolutionaries, the devils are all Reactionaries. You, who have been in Russia, know that this is not the case. People in Russia, as elsewhere, are all made of the same stuff: their opinions are largely due to circumstance. But we English have a passion for meddling with other people's business, without understanding what that business is. This is especially the case when any complex problem arises

in a foreign country, such as the Dreyfus case or the Russian Revolution. Some people call this our great traditional sympathy with "nations rightly struggling to be free." Unfortunately such sympathy being generally based on a total misapprehension of the questions at issue, very often does more harm than good. For instance, when not long ago in the House of Commons it was debated whether or no the King should pay a visit to the Emperor of Russia, and some one suggested that were the visit to be cancelled the immense majority of the Russian people would regard it as an insult, and that the Russian peasants bore no ill-will towards the Emperor, but rather complained of the results of a system of government, which in the last few years has undergone and is still undergoing radical change—when such arguments were brought forward some of the Labour Members nearly burst with ironical cheers. Here, they thought, was the voice of officialdom, Torydom, and hypocrisy speaking. Now turn to the facts. When Professor Kovolievski was elected a member

for the first Duma in the government of Karkov as an advanced Liberal member, he after his election asked some of his peasant electors whether he was not right in supposing that had he said anything offensive with regard to the Emperor at his meetings, there would have been no applause.

"We should not only not have applauded," was the answer, "but we should have beaten you to death."

And I am convinced that if any of our Labour Members went to any Russian village with an interpreter, and made speeches on the subject of the Emperor of Russia, such as they made in the House of Commons, they would swiftly be lynched. This, of course, does not mean that the Russian peasant is averse to reform, or does not suffer from the evil effects of bad government; but it means that he is a Russian, and that is a thing which our enthusiastic Liberals entirely overlook, and they overlook it because they do not know what Russia is, or what a Russian is. They are divorced from fact and soar in

wide spaces of theory. And that is the reason that although all my sympathies in Russia are with the poor, and with any people who contribute a mite towards the cause of reform, the ignorance of English Liberals on the subject makes me sick.

In this book you will not find, thank Heaven, very much talk of politics. You will find, on the other hand, truthful and accurate records of real people, seen with the naked eye, unobscured by prejudice and not magnified by the spectacles of exaggeration. Also some true stories. I hope it will amuse you.

That is all I have to say about this book. Books, like every other human thing, rarely end by being what they were meant to be. The books we dream of are magnificent, interesting, exhaustive, bulky, but nevertheless not too long. They glow in the imagination like a living coal. The books we write are scrappy, short, not sufficiently interesting, and often appear to be too long in spite of their brevity. So far from glowing, they

resemble the ashes of an extinct cigar. Every time one finishes a book one thinks the next one will be better; but this is an illusion. This book is no exception to the melancholy rule, but such as it is, it is yours, and, I repeat once more, I hope you will like it.

M. B.

North Cottage
London, 1908

PREFACE

THE essays and stories contained in this book are reprinted for the greater part from the *Morning Post*, by whose kind permission I have been allowed to republish them here. My thanks are also due to the Editor of the *Oxford and Cambridge Review* for permission to republish the article on Andreev's *Life of Man*; and to the Editor of that brilliant but too short-lived periodical the *Ne Plus Ultra* (published at Eton), for allowing me to make use of a story called "The Amorphists," which appeared in its columns. My thanks are due to Mr. H. Belloc, who kindly read the proofs of this book for me.

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RUSSIAN ESSAYS AND STORIES

A JOURNEY IN THE NORTH

I STARTED at night. The battle for a place in the third-class carriage was fought and won for me by a porter. A third-class carriage in Russia is not at all uncomfortable if you have a thick blanket, because every passenger has a right to the whole length of a seat. Three people can sit on the seat but only one can lie on it. The other two lie in berths above you or below you, as the case may be. At the end of the seat is a passage, and then there are further seats stretched horizontally across the windows. The seats are made of wood, and if you have a thick blanket and a pillow they are quite as comfortable as any other bed.

The differences between railway carriages in

Russia and in England is that the Russian carriage is broader and bigger. Every carriage (whatever the class) is a corridor carriage. The first class is divided into separate compartments, but in the second and third class there is no partition and no doors dividing the corridor from the seats occupied by the passengers.

When you first step into the third-class carriage it is like entering pandemonium. It is almost dark, save for a feeble candle that gutters peevishly over the door, and all the inmates are yelling and throwing their boxes and baskets and bundles about. This is only the process of installation; it all quiets down presently, and everybody is seated with his bed unfolded, if he has one, his luggage stowed away, his provisions spread out, as if he had been living there for years and meant to remain there for many years to come.

This particular carriage was full. The people in it were workmen going home for the winter, peasants, merchants, and mechanics. Opposite to my seat were two workmen (painters), and next to them a peasant with a big grey beard. Sitting by the farther window

was a well-dressed mechanic. The painter lighted a candle and stuck it on a small movable table that projected from my window; he produced a small bottle of vodka from his pocket, a kettle for tea, and some cold sausage, and general conversation began. The guard came to tell the people who had come to see their friends off—there were numbers of them in the carriage, and they were most of them drunk—to go. The guard looked at my ticket for Vologda and asked me where I was ultimately going to. I said "Viatka," upon which the mechanic said: "So am I; we will go together and get our tickets together at Vologda." The painter and the mechanic engaged in conversation, and it appeared that they both came from Kronstadt. The painter had worked there for twenty years, and he cross-questioned the mechanic with evident pleasure, winking at me every now and then. The mechanic went into the next compartment for a moment, and the painter then said to me with glee: "He is lying; he says he has worked in Kronstadt, and he doesn't know where such and such things are." The mechanic came back. "Who is the Com-

mandant at Kronstadt?" asked the painter. The mechanic evidently did not know, and gave a name at random. The painter laughed triumphantly and said that the Commandant was some one else. Then the mechanic volunteered further information to show his knowledge of Kronstadt; he talked of another man who worked there, a tall man; the painter said that the man was short. The mechanic said that he was employed in the manufacture of shells. They talked of the disorders at Kronstadt last year. The painter said that he and his son lay among cabbages while the fighting was going on. He added that the matter had nearly ended in the total destruction of Kronstadt. "God forbid," said the peasant sitting next to me. No sympathy was expressed with the mutineers. The painter at last told the mechanic that he had lived for twenty years at Kronstadt, and that he, the mechanic, was a liar. The mechanic protested feebly. He was an obvious liar, but why he told these lies I have no idea. Perhaps he was not a mechanic at all. Possibly he was a spy. He professed to be a native of a village near Viatka, and declared that he had been

absent for six years (the next evening he said twelve years).

From this question of disorders at Kronstadt the talk veered, I forget how, to the topic of the Duma. "Which Duma?" some one asked; "the town Duma?" "No, the State Duma," said the mechanic; "it seems they are going to have a new one." "Nothing will come of it," said the painter; "people will not go" (he meant the voters). "No, they won't go," said the peasant, cutting the air with his hand (a gesture common to nearly all Russians of that class), "because they know now that it means being put in prison." "Yes," said the painter, "they are hanging everybody." And there was a knowing chorus of "They won't go and vote; they know better." Then the mechanic left his seat and sat down next to the painter and said in a whisper: "The Government——" At that moment the guard came in; the mechanic stopped abruptly, and when the guard went out the topic of conversation had been already changed. I heard no further mention of the Duma during the whole of the rest of the journey to Vologda. The people then began to prepare to go to sleep, except

the peasant, who told me that he often went three days together without sleep, but when he did sleep it was a business to wake him. He asked me if his bundle of clothes was in my way. "We are a rough people," he said, "but we know how not to get in the way. I am not going far." I was just going to sleep when I was wakened by a terrific noise in the next compartment. Some one opened the door and the following scraps of shouted dialogue were audible. A voice: "Did you say I was drunk or did you not?" Second voice (obviously the guard): "I asked for your ticket." First voice: "You said I was drunk. You are a liar." Second voice: "You have no right to say I am a liar. I asked for your ticket." First voice: "You are a liar. You said I was drunk. I will have you discharged." This voice then recited a long story to the public in general. The next day I ascertained that the offended man was a lawyer, one of the "bourgeoisie" (a workman explained to me), and that the guard had, in the dark, asked him for his ticket, and then as he made no sign of life had pinched his foot; this having proved ineffectual, he said that the man was drunk,

whereupon the man started to his feet and became wide awake in a moment. Eventually a gendarme was brought in, a "protocol" was drawn up in which both sides of the story were written down, and there, I expect, the matter will remain until the Day of Judgment.

I afterwards made the acquaintance of two men in the next compartment; they were dock labourers and their business was to load ships in Kronstadt. They were exactly like the people whom Gorki describes. One of them gave me a complete description of his mode of life in summer and winter. In summer he loaded ships; in winter he went to a place near Archangel and loaded carts with wood; when the spring came he went back, by water, to St. Petersburg. He asked me what I was. I said that I was an English correspondent. He asked then what I travelled in. I said I was not that kind of correspondent but a newspaper correspondent. Here he called a third friend, who was sitting near us, and said, "Come and look; there is a correspondent here. He is an English correspondent." The friend came—a man with a red beard and a loose shirt with a pattern of flowers on it. "I

don't know you," said the new man. "No; but let us make each other's acquaintance," I said. "You can talk to him," explained the dock labourer; "we have been talking for hours. Although he is plainly a man who has received higher education." "As to whether he has received higher or lower education we don't know," said the friend, "because we haven't yet asked him." Then he paused, reflected, shook hands, and exclaimed: "Now we know each other." "But," said the dock labourer, "how do you print your articles? Do you take a printing press with you when you go, for instance, to the north like you are doing now?" I remarked that they were printed in London, and that I did not have to print them myself. "Please send me one," he said; "I will give you my address." "But it's written in English," I answered. "You can send me a translation in Russian," he retorted.

"English ships come to Kronstadt, and we load them. The men on board do not speak Russian, but we understand each other. For instance, we load, and their inspector comes. We call him 'inspector' (I forget the Russian

word he used, but it was something like skipador), they call him the 'Come on.' The 'Come on' comes, and he says 'That's no good' (niet dobrò), he means not right (nié harosho), and then we make it right. And when their sailors come we ask them for matches. When we have food, what we call 'coshevar,' they call it 'all right.' And when we finish work, what we call 'shabash' (it means "all over"), they call 'Seven o'clock.' They bring us matches that light on anything," and here he produced a box of English matches and lit a dozen of them just to show. "When we are ragged, they say, 'No clothes, plenty vodka,' and when we are well dressed, they say, 'No plenty vodka, plenty clothes.' Their vodka," he added, "is very good." Then followed an elaborate comparison of the wages and conditions of life of Russian and English workmen. Another man joined in, and being told about the correspondent, said: "I would like to read your writings, because we are a 'gray' people (*i.e.* a rough people), and we read only the *Pieterbourski Listok*, which is, so to speak, a 'black gang' newspaper. Heaven knows what is happen-

ing in Russia. They are hanging, shooting and bayoneting every one." And he went away. The dock labourer went on for hours talking about the "Come on," the "All right," and the "Seven o'clock."

Then I went back to my berth and slept, till the dock labourer came and fetched me and said that I had to see the soldiers. I went into the next compartment, and there were two soldiers; one was dressed up, that is to say he had put on spectacles and a pocket-handkerchief over his head, and was giving an exhibition of mimicry, of recruits crying as they left home, of mothers-in-law, and other stock jokes. It was funny, and it ended in general singing. A sailor came to look on. He was a non-commissioned officer, and he told me in great detail how the Sveaborg mutiny had been put down. He said that the loyal sailors had been given 150 roubles (£15) a-piece to fight. I think he must have been exaggerating. At the same time he expressed no sympathy with the mutineers. He said that rights were all very well for countries like that of the Finns. But in Russia they only meant disorders, and as long as the disorders lasted Russia would be

a feeble country. He had much wanted to go to the war, but had not been able to do so. In fact, he was thoroughly loyal and *bien pensant*.

We arrived at Vologda Station some time in the evening. The station was crowded with peasants. While I was watching the crowd a drunken peasant entered and asked everybody to give him ten kopecks. Then he caught sight of me and said that he was quite certain I would give him ten kopecks. I did, and he danced a kind of wild dance and finally collapsed on the floor. A man was watching these proceedings, a fairly respectably dressed man in a pea-jacket. He entered into conversation with me, and said that he had just come back from Manchuria, where he had been employed at Mukden Station. "In spite of which," he added, "I have not yet received a medal." I said that I had also been in Manchuria. He said he lived twenty versts up the line, and came to the station to look at the people—it was so amusing. "Have you any acquaintances here?" he asked. I said "No." "Then let us go and have tea." I was willing, and we went to the tea-shop,

which was exactly opposite the station. "Here," said the man, "we will talk of what was, of what is, and of what is to be." As we were walking in a policeman who was standing by the door whispered in my ear, "I shouldn't go in there with that *gentleman*." "Why?" I asked. "Well, he's not quite reliable," he answered in the softest of whispers. "How?" I asked. "Well, he killed a man yesterday and then robbed him," said the policeman. So then I hurriedly expressed my regret to my acquaintance, and said that I must at all costs return to the station. "The policeman has been lying to you," said the man. "It's a lie; it's only because I haven't got a passport." (This was not exactly a recommendation in itself.) I went into the first-class waiting-room. The man came and sat down next to me, and now that I examined his face I saw that he had the expression and the stamp of countenance of a born thief. One of the waiters came and told him to go, and he flatly refused, and the waiter made a low bow to him. Then gently but firmly I advised him to go away, as it might lead to trouble. He finally said: "All

right, but we shall meet in the train, in liberty." He went away, but he sent an accomplice, who stood behind my chair, and who also had the expression of a thief.

After waiting for several hours I approached the train for Yaroslav. Just as I was getting in a small boy came up to me and said in a whisper, "The policeman sent me to tell you that the man is a well-known thief, that he robs people every day, and that he gets into the train, even into the first-class carriages, and robs people, and he is after you now." I entered a first-class carriage and told the guard there was a thief about. I had not been there long before the accomplice arrived and began walking up and down the corridor. But the guard, I am happy to say, turned him out instantly, and I saw nothing more of the thief and of his accomplice.

A railway company director, or rather a man who was arranging the purchase of a line, got into the carriage and began at once to harangue against the Government and say that the way in which it had changed the election law was a piece of insolence and would only make everybody more radical. Then he told me that life

in Yaroslav was simply intolerable owing to the manner in which all newspapers and all free discussion had been stopped. We arrived at Yaroslav on the next morning. I went on to Moscow in a third-class carriage. The train stopped at every small station, and there was a constant flow of people coming and going. An old gentleman of the middle class sat opposite to me for a time, and read a newspaper in an audible whisper. Whenever he came to some doings of the Government he said, "Disgraceful, disgraceful!"

Later on in the day a boy of seventeen got into the train. He carried a large box. I was reading a book by Gogol, and had put it down for a moment on the seat. He took it up and said, "I very much like reading books." I asked him how he had learnt. He said he had been at school for one year, and had then learnt at home. He could not stay at school as he was the only son, his father was dead, and he had to look after his small sisters; he was a stone quarrier and life was very hard. He loved reading. In winter the moujiks came to him and he read aloud to them. His favourite book was called *Ivan Mazeppa*.

What that work may be I do not know. I gave him my Gogol. I have never seen any one so pleased. He began to read it—at the end—then and there, and said it would last for several evenings. When he got out he said, "I will never forget you," and he took out of his pocket a lot of sunflower seeds and gave them to me. As we neared Moscow the carriage got fuller and fuller. Two peasants had no railway tickets. One of them asked me if I would lend my ticket to him to show the guard. I said, "With pleasure, only my ticket is for Moscow and yours is for the next station." When the guard came one of the peasants gave him 30 kopecks. "That is very little for two of you," the guard said. They had been travelling nearly all the way from Yaroslav; but finally he let them be. We arrived at Moscow in the evening.

While talking with a person who had had a lot to do with the workmen in Moscow, I was told that they had been much demoralised by the extreme Revolutionary Party, and that now they preferred doing nothing and living at the expense of others to working. "The other night," my informant told me, "a friend of

mine, a hospital nurse, was waked at midnight by two workmen whom she knew well, and had always known to be most respectable men. 'What do you want?' she asked. 'We have come for Brownings,' they said (Colt pistols). 'I haven't any Brownings,' she said. 'Are you not afraid some other hooligans might come and rob you?' they asked. 'No,' she answered; 'but what do you want Brownings for?' 'We are going out *expropriating*,' they said, as quietly as if they had remarked that they were going to their dinner. She then argued with them until four in the morning, and saw that in any case they did not go out expropriating on that night." But this word "expropriation" put into vogue by the revolutionaries, has had a disastrous effect on the working classes, who think they have only to stretch out their hands and take by right anybody else's property.

I travelled back to St. Petersburg in a third-class carriage, which was full of recruits. "They sang all the way (as Jowett said about the poetical but undisciplined undergraduate whom he drove home from a dinner party) bad songs,—very bad songs." Not quite all the

way, however. They were like schoolboys going to a private school, putting on extra assurance. In the railway carriage there was a Zemstvo "Feldsher," a hospital assistant who had been all through the war. We talked of the war, and while we were discussing, a young peasant who was in the carriage joined in and startled us by his sensible and acute observations on the war. "There's a man," said the Feldsher to me, "who has a good head. And it is sheer natural cleverness. That's what a lot of the young peasants are like. And what will become of him? If only these people could be developed!" A little later I began to read a small book. "Are you reading Lermontov?" asked the Feldsher. "No," I answered, "I am reading Shakespeare's Sonnets." "Ah," he said with a sigh, "you are evidently not a married man, but perhaps you are engaged to be married?"

Just as I was preparing to sleep, the guard came and began to search the corners and the floor of the carriage with a candle as if he had dropped a pin or a penny. He explained that there were twelve recruits in the carriage, but that an extra man had got in with them and

that he was looking for him. He then went away. Thereupon one of the recruits explained to me that the man was under one of the seats and hidden by boxes, as he wished to go to St. Petersburg without a ticket. I went to sleep. But the guard came back and turned me carefully over to see if I was the missing man. Then he began to look again in the most unlikely places for a man to be hid. He gave up the search twice, but the hidden man could not resist putting out his head to see what was happening, and before he could get it back the guard coming in at that moment caught sight of him. The man was turned out, but he got into the train again, and the next morning it was discovered that he had stolen one of the recruits' boxes and some article of property from nearly everybody in the carriage, including hats and coats. This he had done while the recruits slept, since when they stopped singing and went to sleep they slept soundly. Later in the night a huge and old peasant entered the train and crept under the seat opposite to me. The guard did not notice him, and after the tickets had been collected from the passengers who got in at that station the man crept out, and

lay down on one of the higher berths. He remained there nearly all night, but at one of the stations the guard said: "Is there no one for this station?" and looking at the peasant, added: "Where are you for, old man?" The man mumbled in pretended sleep. "Where is your ticket?" asked the guard. No answer. At last when the question had been repeated thrice, he said: "I am a poor, little, old man." "You haven't got a ticket," said the guard. "Get out, devil, you might lose me my place—and I a married man. Devil! Devil! Devil!" "It is on account of my extreme poverty," said the old man, and he was turned out.

The next morning I had a long conversation with the young peasant who, the Feldsher said, had brains. I asked him, among other things, if he thought the Government was right in relying on what it calls the innate and fundamental conservatism of the great mass of the Russian people. "If the Government says that the whole of the peasantry is Conservative it lies," he said. "It is true that a great part of the people is rough—uneducated—but there are many who know. The war opened our eyes. You see, the Russian peasant is ac-

customed to be told by the authorities that a glass (taking up my tumbler) is a man, and to believe it. The Army is on the side of the Government. At least it is really on the side of the people, but it feels itself helpless. The soldiers are afraid of being punished. If they could act together like they did at Kharkov this summer (a regiment mutinied there and all the troops sent to quell the mutiny joined the mutineers) all would be over in a day—and the Government will never yield except to force. There is nothing to be done." And we talked of other things. The recruits joined in the conversation, and I offered a small meat patty to one of them, who said: "No, thank you. I am greatly satisfied with you as it is, without your giving me a meat patty."

The theft which had taken place in the night was discussed from every point of view. "We took pity on him and we hid him," they said, "and he robbed us." They spoke of it without any kind of bitterness or grievance, and nobody said, "I told you so." Then we arrived at St. Petersburg.

DOWN THE VOLGA

ON the way to Ribinsk my carriage was occupied by a party of workmen, including a carpenter and a wheelwright, who were going to work on somebody's property in the government of Tver; they did not know whose property, and they did not know whither they were going. They were under the authority of an old man who came and talked to me, because, he said, the company of the youths who were with him was tedious. He told me a great many things, but as he was hoarse and the train made a rattling noise, I could not hear a word he said. There were also in the carriage two Tartars and a small boy about thirteen years old, who had a domineering character and put himself in charge of the carriage. The discomfort of travelling third class in Russia does not consist in the accommodation, but in the fact that

one is constantly waked during the night by passengers coming in and by the guard asking for one's ticket. The small boy with the domineering character—he wore an old military cap on the back of his head as a sign of strength of purpose—contributed in no small degree to the general discomfort. He apparently was in no need of sleep, and he went from passenger to passenger telling them where they would have to change and where they would have to get out, and offering to open the window if needed. I had a primitive candlestick made of a candle stuck into a bottle; it fell on my head just as I went to sleep, so I put it on the floor and went to sleep again. But the small boy came and waked me and told me that my bottle was on the floor, and that he had put it back again. I thanked him, but directly he was out of sight I put it back again on the floor, and before long he came back, waked me a second time,—and told me that my candlestick had again fallen down. This time I told him, not without emphasis, to leave it alone, and I went to sleep again. But the little boy was not defeated; he waked me again with the in-

formation that a printed advertisement had fallen out of the book I had been reading, on to the floor. This time I told him that if he waked me again I should throw him out of the window.

Later in the night a tidy-looking man of the middle class entered the carriage with his wife. They began to chatter, and to complain of the length of the benches, the officious boy with the domineering character lending them his sympathy and advice. This went on till one of the Tartars could bear it no longer, and he cried out in a loud voice that if they wanted beds six yards long they had better not travel in a train, and that they were making everybody else's sleep impossible. I blessed that Tartar unawares, and after that there was peace.

The comfort of travelling third class in Russia is that there is always tea to be had. One would need the pen of Charles Lamb to sing the praises of Russian tea. The difference between our tea and Russian tea is not that Russian tea is weaker or that it has lemon in it. I have heard Englishmen say sometimes: "I don't want any of your exquisite Russian tea; I want a good cup of strong tea." This

is as if you were to say: "I don't want any of your soft German music; I want some nice loud English music." It is a question of kind; not of degree. You can have tea in Russia as strong as you like. The difference is not in the strength, but in the flavour and in the fact that it is always made with boiling water, and is always fresh. But if you put a piece of lemon into a strong cup of Ceylon tea and think that the result is Russian tea you are mistaken. Russian tea is an exquisitely refreshing drink, and I sometimes wonder whether tea in England in the eighteenth century, the tea sung of by Pope and of which Dr. Johnson drank thirty-six cups running, was not probably identical with Russian tea. It certainly was not Ceylon tea.

Towards ten o'clock in the morning we arrived at Ribinsk, and there I embarked on a steamer to go down the Volga as far as Nijni-Novgorod. I took a first-class ticket and received a clean deck cabin, containing a leather sofa (with no blankets or sheets) and a washing-stand with a fountain tap. We started at two o'clock in the afternoon. There were few passengers on board. The Volga

was not what I had expected it would be like (what place is?). I had imagined a vast expanse of water in an illimitable plain, instead of which there was a broad, brown river, with green shelving though not steep banks, wooded with birch trees and fir trees and many kinds of shrubs; sometimes the banks consisted of sloping pastures and sometimes of cornfields. In the evening we arrived at Yaroslav, an extraordinarily picturesque little city on the top of a steep bank. All day long the sky had been grey and heavy with long piled-up clouds, but the sun as it set made for itself a thin strip of gold beneath the grey masses, and when it had sunk the masses themselves glinted like armour, and the strip beneath became a stretch of pure and luminous twilight. In the twilight the town was seen at its best. I went ashore and walked about the streets of the quiet city: a sleepy town, with trees and grass everywhere (the trees very dark in the twilight); the houses low, two-storeyed, and all painted white, with pale green roofs as white as ghosts in the dusk, ornamented with pilasters and Eighteenth-century and Empire arches and arcades. Every now and then one came across a church with

the remains of the sunset making the gilt minarets glisten. The whole was a symphony in dark green, white and lilac (the sky was lilac by now). The shops were all shut, the houses shuttered, the passers-by few. The grass grows thick on the cobble-stones. I wandered about thinking how well Vernon Lee would seize on the "genius loci" of this sleepy city, dreaming in the lilac July twilight, with its alternate vistas of luminous white houses and dark glooms of trees. How she would extract the spirit of the place, and find the exact note in other places with which it corresponded, whether in Gascony, or Tuscany, or Bavaria; and I reflected that all I could do would be to say I had seen Yaroslav—I had walked about in it, and that it was a picturesque city.

We left Yaroslav at eleven at night. In the dining-room of the steamer I had left a Tauchnitz volume called *Fräulein Schmidt and Mr. Anstruther*, by the author of *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. I was looking forward to reading this before going to sleep; but this was not to be. The volume had disappeared. The next morning the matter was explained.

There was a family travelling in the steamer, consisting of a mother, a daughter, and a son. The mother was very young-looking, although both the daughter and son were grown up; they had found the book and thought (I suppose) it had been left behind, or that it belonged to the public library. This book occupied them for the rest of the journey. They talked of nothing else. The mother had read it before. The daughter must have sat up late reading it, because she handed it over to the son early in the morning. They all thought it intensely amusing and interesting, but they evidently disagreed about it. These are the things, by the way, which ought to please an author. An author is delighted with a few neatly-turned "clichés" in a literary journal, turned out machine-made from the brains of literary men who have lost all their freshness of palate and can no more enjoy a book than a tea-taster can enjoy a cup of tea; but the reward really worth getting is the passionate interest of the man in the street, of a family, for instance, on a steamer between Yaroslav and Nijni-Novgorod. What they disagreed about was the character of the

heroine. The girl loathed her. The mother faintly tolerated her. The son liked her. The girl's argument was clear and forcible. She said she thought that Fräulein Schmidt was an egotist and fundamentally intolerant, and that she looked down on humanity from a pedestal of superiority. She said she felt the same thing about Elizabeth; Elizabeth and Fräulein Schmidt, she argued, enlisted your understanding, your sense of amusement in a most subtle way, in describing the pain of being interrupted in some delicious occupation by a dreadful bore. The girl said that all these descriptions of bores amused her immensely, but they made her sympathise with the bore. She preferred them to Elizabeth and to Fräulein Schmidt. She felt sure Elizabeth and Fräulein Schmidt had no conception of how trying she probably was to the poor bores. Fräulein Schmidt had infinite tolerance for clever and charming people like Professor Martens and her father, but of the people like the stepmother she never gave one a glimpse of the good side.

Now the daughter argued that these people always have a good side. The son said they

did not, that they were described just as they were. The daughter said she had studied music in Berlin and Leipzig, and had lived in three German families, and that she had often endured a great deal from people exactly like Fräulein Schmidt's stepmother; but she had always found that they were at the same time pathetic in their kindness at times. Fräulein Schmidt never gave you a hint of a kind side. She merely said these people starved the soul—which was nonsense; nobody, she added, starves one's soul, one does that oneself. The mother said that Fräulein Schmidt probably understood the good side of the boring people, and did not mention it because it is not so amusing to describe. The daughter answered that it was interesting, if not amusing, and often touching. Fräulein Schmidt thought herself superior to everybody, because she read Matthew Arnold.

The son said that as far as he got he thought that the people described were just like those whom he had known at Heidelberg; that Fräulein Schmidt was charming and Mr. Anstruther loathsome. "Yes," said the girl, "but she makes him loathsome on purpose.

One wonders how Rose-Marie could ever have liked him for one second. She flatters herself, too, by being careful to let us know the old man thought she was like Hebe. She was evidently not a bit like Hebe." And so the discussion continued without end.

We reached Nijni-Novgorod the next morning at eight. I took a cab. "Drive," I said, "to the best hotel." "There is the Hôtel Rossia at the top of the town and the Hôtel Petersburg at the bottom," the cabman answered. "Which is the best?" I asked. "The Hôtel Rossia is the best at the top of the town," he answered, "and the Hôtel Petersburg is the best at the bottom." "Which is the most central?" I asked. "The Rossia is the most central at the top and the Petersburg is the most central at the bottom." "Which is nearest the Fair?" "They are neither near the Fair." "Are there no hotels near the Fair?" "There are no hotels near the Fair *in the town*."

We drove to the Rossia, a long way, up a very steep hill past the Kremlin: a hill like Windsor Hill, only twice as long. The Kremlin is like Windsor, supposing the out-

side walls of Windsor had never been restored and the Castle were taken away. When we got to the hotel the cabman said: "This part of the town is deserted in summer; nobody lives here; everybody lives near the Fair." "But I said I wanted to be in the Fair," I answered. "Oh!" he answered, "of course if you want to be *in* the Fair there are plenty of hotels in the Fair." So we drove down again, right into the lower part of the town, and thence across a large wooden bridge into the Fair.

Nijni-Novgorod occupies both sides of the Volga. On one side there is a steep hill, a Kremlin, and a town covering the hill till it reaches the quays and extending along them; on the other side is a huge plain, and the Fair. The hill part of the town is wooded and green; the Fair is a town in itself, and during the Fair period the whole business of life, shops, including hotels, theatres, banks, baths, post, exchange, restaurants, is transferred thither. The shops are one-storeyed, and occupy square blocks, which they intersect in parallel lines. They are of every description and quality, ranging from the supply of the needs of the

extremely rich to those of the extremely poor. I found a room in a hotel. The hotels were crowded just then, although I was told that the Fair had never been so empty. It had not been open long, and merchants were still arriving daily with their goods. The centre of the Fair is a house called the "Glavnii Dom," the principal house; here the post and the police are concentrated and the most important shops — Fabergé, for instance. There is, of course, a large quantity of dealers in furs and skins; I bought nothing, in spite of great temptation, except a blanket and a clothes brush. The blankets are dear. Star sapphires, on the other hand, seemed to be as cheap as dirt. But perhaps this is always the case everywhere. I never quite understood when the people had their meals here. The restaurants, of which there is a large quantity, seemed to be empty all day; they were certainly full all night. Perhaps the people did not eat during the daytime. In every restaurant there was a theatrical performance, which began at nine o'clock in the evening and went on until four o'clock the next morning, with few interruptions; it consisted mostly of

singing and dancing. Politically the place was as quiet as possible, but, contrary to my expectations, it is what is called a "Progressist" place.

The newspapers are all Liberal, and Progressist "candidates" were expected to get in at the next elections. I saw a newspaper editor who complained of the new system the Government have adopted of inflicting fines, right and left, on newspapers. His newspaper, which is the chief Nijni daily, was fined 1000 roubles (£100) for having printed a leading article against capital punishment in general. He showed me the article and I read it. It was certainly abstract. He said that he expected Liberal members to be returned for Nijni, although an immense amount of pressure would no doubt be exerted to prevent such a thing happening.

I left Nijni on Saturday the 10th. What surprised and struck me most about the Fair was the great size of it. One hears of the Fair of Nijni, and one pictures to oneself a quantity of small booths in a market-place. One does not realise—at least I did not—that the Fair is a large town consisting entirely of

shops, hotels, and restaurants. The most important merchandise that passes hands at the Fair consists of furs. But there are goods of every variety; second-hand books, tea and silks from China, gems from the Urals, and "art nouveau" furniture. There are also old curiosity shops rich in old Church vestments, stiff copes and jewelled chasubles, which would be found most useful by those people who like to furnish their drawing-rooms entirely with objects diverted from their proper use; that is to say, with cigarette ash trays made of Venetian wells and teapots made out of musical instruments and old book bindings. Nijni during the Fair is almost entirely inhabited by merchants—merchants of every kind and description. The majority of them wear loose Russian shirts and top-boots. I noticed that at Nijni it did not in the least signify how untidily one was dressed; however untidy one looked one was sure of being treated with respect, because slovenliness at Nijni does not necessarily imply poverty, and the people of the place justly reason that however sordid one's exterior appearance may be there is no knowing but that one may be a

millionaire. Another thing which struck me here, a thing which has struck me in several other places, was the way in which people determine your nationality by your clothes. And while they paid no attention to degree in the matter of clothes at Nijni, as to whether they were shabby or new, they paid a great deal of attention to kind. For instance, the day I arrived I was wearing an ordinary English straw hat. This headgear caused quite a sensation amongst the sellers of Astrakan fur. They crowded round me, crying out, "Vairy nice, vairy cheap, Engleesh." I bought a different kind of hat, a white yachting cap, and loose silk Russian shirt, such as the merchants wore.

That evening I went to a restaurant at which there was a musical performance. I fell into conversation with a young merchant sitting at the next table, and he said to me after we had had some conversation, "You are, I suppose, from the Caucasus." I said "No." We talked of other things, the Far East among other topics. He then exclaimed: "You are, I suppose, from the Far East." I again said "No," and we again talked of other

things. He had some friends with him who joined in the conversation, and they were consumed with curiosity as to whence I had come, and I told them they could guess. They guessed various places, such as Archangel, Irkutsk, Warsaw, and Saghalien, and at last one of them cried out with joy: "I know what place you belong to; you are a native of Nijni." They went away triumphant. Their place was taken by a very old merchant, a rugged, grey-headed, bearded, peasant merchant. He contemplated the singing and dancing which was taking place on the stage for some time, and then he said to me, "Don't you wish you were twenty years younger?" I said I did, but I did not think that I should in that case be better equipped for this particular kind of entertainment, as I should be only twelve years old. "Impossible," said the old man indignantly. "You are quite bald, and bear every sign of old age."

I left Nijni on the wrong steamer—that is to say, by a line I did not mean to patronise because I knew it was the worst. There was no help for it, because my passport was not ready in time. I took a first-class cabin on

a big steamer full of children with their nurses and parents. The children ran about the cabin all day long without stopping. Children, I notice, are the same all over the world; they play the same games: they make the same noise. In this case there were five sisters and a small brother. What reminded me much of all children in general and of my own experience as a child in particular was that the boy suddenly began to howl because his sisters wouldn't let him play with them; and he cried out, "I want to play too," and the sisters, when the matter was finally brought before an arbitration court of parents, who were playing cards, said that the boy made all games impossible. Also there were three nurses in the cabin, who, whatever the children did, told them not to do it, and every now and then one heard familiar phrases such as "Don't sit on the oilcloth with your bare legs," "Don't lean out of the window with that cold of yours." The passengers on the boat were uninteresting.

There was a couple who spoke bad French to each other out of refinement, but who relapsed into Russian when they had really something interesting to say. There was

a student who played the pianoforte with astonishing facility and amazing execution; there were the elder sisters of the small children, who also played the pianoforte in exactly the same way as young people play it in England —that is to say, with convulsive jerks over the difficult passages and uninterrupted insistence on the loud pedal and a foolish bass. The grown-up members of the party played "Vindt" all day.

When we arrived at Kazan I got out to look at the town. It also possesses a Kremlin with white walls and crenelated towers and old churches, a museum which contains the most uninteresting and heterogeneous collection of objects imaginable, and a large monastery. It is the most stagnant-looking city I have ever seen.

The Volga beyond Nijni is considerably broader. It is never less than 1200 yards in breadth, and from Nijni onwards, on the right bank of the river, there is a range of lofty hills, mostly wooded, but sometimes rocky and grassy, which go sheer down into the river. The left bank is flat, and consists of green meadows. Below Kazan it is joined by the

river Kama, and becomes a mighty river, never less than three-quarters of a mile in breadth. These facts could be derived quite easily and more abundantly from a handbook of geography. "What does the Volga look like?" is the question, I suppose, people wish to have answered. My answer to that is that in various parts of its course the Volga reminds me of almost every river I have ever seen, from the Dart to the Liao-he and from the Neckar to the Nile. Below Kazan its aspect is gloomy and sombre, a great stretch of broad brown waters, a wooded mountainous bank on one side, a monotonous plain on the other. But if the weather is fine—and it was gloriously fine after we reached Kazan—the effects of light on the great expanse of water are miraculous. It is at dawn that one sees the magic of these waters; at dawn and at sunset that the great broad expanse, turning to gold or to silver according as the sky is crimson, mauve, or rosy and grey, has a mystery and majesty of its own. We met other steamers on the way, but during the whole voyage from Nijni to Astrakan we only passed two small sailing boats.

I got out at Samara, and spent the night at a hotel. The next day I embarked again for Astrakan, after having explored the town, in which I failed to find an object of interest. From Samara to Saratov the hills on the right bank of the river diminish in size, and instead of descending sheer into the river they slope away from it, and as the hills diminish the vegetation grows more scanty. The left bank is flat and monotonous as before. From Samara to Saratov I travelled third class, to see what it was like on board the steamer. There are on the steamer four official classes and an unofficial fifth class. The third class have a general cabin on the lower deck with two tiers of bunks. The fourth class have a kind of enclosure, which contains one large broad board on which they encamp. The fourth class contains the "steerage" passengers. It is indescribably dirty. The fifth class is composed of still dirtier and still poorer people, who lie about on boxes, bales, or on whatever vacant space they can find on the lower deck. They lie for the most part like corpses, in a profound slumber, generally face downwards, flat upon the floor. The third class is respect-

able and decently clean; it has, moreover, one immense advantage—some permanently open windows. In the first class there was among the company a great aversion to draughts. They had not what some one once called "La passion des Anglais pour les courants d'air." In the third class there was no such prejudice. The passengers were various. There were two students, some merchants, twenty Cossacks going home on leave, a policeman, a public servant, several peasants, and a priest.

On the bunk just over mine sprawled a large bearded Cossack, who at once asked me where I was going, my occupation, my country, and my name. I answered more or less in the words of the song that

> "My name it is Jack Rover,
> From over the hills I come;
> I get my living on the ups and downs;"

in fact, that I was a newspaper correspondent and an Englishman. I then lay down on my bunk. Another Cossack from the other side of the cabin called out at the top of his voice to the man who was over me: "Who is that man?" "He is a foreigner." "Is he travelling with goods?" "No, he is just travelling,

nothing more." "Where does he come from?" "I don't know." Then, looking down at me from his bunk, the Cossack who was above me said, "Thou art quite bald, little father. Is it illness that did it or nature?" "Nature," I answered. "Should'st try an ointment," he said. "I have tried many and strong ointments," I said, "including onion, tar and paraffin, none of which were of any avail. There is nothing to be done." "No," said the Cossack, with a sigh. "There is nothing to be done. It is God's business."

There is no particular discomfort in travelling third class on the steamer. The bunks are, with the aid of blankets, as comfortable as those in the first class. One can obtain the same food, and there is plenty of fresh air. Nevertheless, if one only travels thus for a day and a night it is indescribably fatiguing, because one has to change and readjust one's hours. For at the first streak of dawn the people begin to talk, and by sunrise they have washed and are having tea. It is not as if they went to bed earlier. For all day long they talk and they go to sleep quite late, about eleven. But they have the blessed gift pos-

sessed by Napoleon and Sarah Bernhardt of snatching half-hours or five minutes of sleep whenever they feel in need of it. If one travels like this for several days running, one gets used to it, of course, and one also acquires the habit of snatching sleep at odd moments during the daytime, but if one travels like this for a day or two the result is, as I have said before, extreme bodily fatigue.

The public servant, who had a small post in some provincial town, came and talked to me. He asked me if Shaliapin, the famous singer, had sung at Nijni. Shaliapin, he added, was his master. "I have," he said, "a magnificent bass voice." "Are you fond of music?" I asked. "Fond of music!" he cried. "When I hear music I am like a wild animal. I go mad." "Do you mean to go on the stage?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "when I have learnt enough. In the meantime I am a public servant—I am in the Government service." "That, I suppose, you find tedious," I said. "It is more than tedious, it is disgusting," and he began to abuse the Government. I said there was a great difference between the Russia of to-day and the Russia of four years

ago. "There is no difference at all," he said; "we have obtained absolutely nothing except paper promises." I said: "I am not talking of what the Government has done or failed to do; I am talking of the general aspect of things, of Russian life as it strikes a foreigner. I was here three or four years ago, and I am struck by the great difference between then and now. Had I met you then you would not have talked politics with me; there were no politics to talk." "That is true," he answered, "we have now a political life."

Here one of the Cossacks asked him who he was. "I am a famous singer," he answered. "I have sung at the Merchants' Club at the district town of A——. I am a pupil of Shaliapin, who is the king of basses and is well known throughout the whole civilised world, and who has sung in America. He is a Russian. Think of that." The Cossack seemed impressed. The singer got out at one of the stations; perhaps one day he will be as well known as Shaliapin; perhaps, on the other hand, he has merely been called and will not be chosen.

The people in the cabin had their meals at

different times of the day, the chief meal consisting of tea, which took place twice a day. Every time we stopped at a place a flood of beggars invaded our cabin asking for alms. The interesting point is that they received them. They were never sent empty away, and were invariably given either some coppers, some bread, or some melon. I am sure there is no country in the world where people give so readily to the poor as in Russia. One has only to walk about the streets in any Russian town to notice this fact. Here in the third-class saloon it especially struck me. I did not see one single beggar turned away without a gift of some kind. One little boy was given a piece of bread and a large slice of water-melon.

At the many small stations at which we called on the banks of the river there were crowds of itinerant vendors who sold various descriptions of food—hot pies, fried fish, gigantic water-melons, apples, red currants, and cucumbers. The whole duration of each stop at any of these places was occupied by the unloading and loading of the steamer with goods. This is done by a horde of creatures

in red and blue shirts called loaders, who have a kind of ledge strapped on to their backs which enables them to support enormous loads. Like big gnomes, during the whole of the stop, they are seen scurrying from the hold of the steamer to the wooden quay and back again to the steamer. On the quay itself, either placidly looking on and munching sunflower seeds or else wildly gesticulating over a bargain at a booth, a motley herd of passengers and inhabitants of the place is swarming: many-coloured, bright, ragged, and squalid, like the crowds depicted in a sacred picture waiting for a miracle or a parable under the burning sky of Palestine.

Samara and Saratov have not the features which characterise the towns of the Upper Volga. They have no Kremlin, no remains of a fortress dominating the town and enclosed in old walls. Saratov is a collection of wooden houses which look as if they had been made by a Swiss artisan for the Earl's Court Exhibition and exposed on the side of a steep hill.

Between Saratov and Tzaritsin the character of the river changes altogether, the vegetation

begins to dwindle, the great hills on the right bank of the river diminish, and the farther one travels south the lower they become. The left bank is flat, monotonous, and green as before. The river itself broadens, and in some places it is several kilometres wide. You get the impression that you are travelling on a large lake or on a sea rather than on a river. The farther south one travels the greater is the beauty of the river. It is a solemn, majestic river; one understands its having been the mother and inspirer of a quantity of poetry, of folk-song and folk-lore; and one understands, too, how appropriate the deep octaves, the broad slow-dying notes and echoes of the Volga songs are to these great melancholy spaces of shining water. Every day on the steamer between Saratov and Astrakan I awoke at dawn and went out on to the deck to sniff the freshness and to watch the process of daybreak. The soft, grey sky trembled into a delicate tint of lilac, and over the far-off banks of the river, which were distant enough to have the appearance of a range of violet hills, came the first blush of dawn, and then a deeper rose, while the whole upper sky was

washed with a clean daffodil colour, which was reflected in silver on the blue water. And then the sun rose—a huge red ball of fire, casting golden scales beneath him on to the water.

Towards noon, perhaps, the sky will be piled with white clouds, and the river looks like an immense hard glass, reflecting in unruffled detail every curve and shadow of the cloudland, and the small motionless trees of the banks which in the sunless heat are as unreal as a mirage. Later in the afternoon the water seems to grow more and more luminous; the sensation of some kind of enchantment, of something wizard-like and unreal increases, and one would not be surprised to catch sight of the walls of Tristram's Castle in the air, the wizard walls to which he promised to bring Iseult—the castle built of the stuff of which rainbows are made, of fire, dew, and the colours of the morning. But with the sunset this feeling of unreality and enchantment ceases and gives way; the nearer bank stands out in sharp outline, intensely real between purple skies and grey waters, and over the farther bank hangs the intense blue of woody distances.

Between Tzaritsin and Astrakan the character of the river changes yet again. The hills on the right bank vanish altogether; both the banks are flat now—unlimited steppes possessing scant vegetation and culminating in steep banks of yellow sand. It was here that the river reminded me of the Nile.

Tzaritsin itself is a great trade centre; the best caviare and the best water-melons are to be obtained here. Most of the third-class passengers got out at Tzaritsin. I was amused by the process, which I watched on shore, of a huge block of stone being hauled up a hill by a gang of workmen. The spectacle was so utterly unlike anything one sees in other countries. Pieces of rock are also hauled up hills in other lands, but the manner in which it is done is entirely different. Seven men were hauling the rope; they were ragged, dirty, and dressed in red and blue shirts, stained and dusty, while their tufts of yellow hair stuck out of their tattered peaked caps. By the block of stone stood the leader of the gang. Then suddenly, when he thought the time had come, he intoned a chant, a solo, about fifteen notes, which might have been

written in the Scotch scale (the scale of G major without the F sharp), plaintive and unexpected; then he beat time with a wave of his left hand, and at the fourth beat the whole gang chimed in, continuing the melody in parts and hauling as they sang, and then abruptly ending on the dominant. Then after a short pause the leader again intoned his solo and the chorus again made harmonies to the plaintive melody, and this was repeated till the block of stone was hauled up the hill.

What I should like to know is when people of a country leave off singing natural folk-song tunes like "Ca' the Yowes," for instance, and when they begin to substitute for them the répertoire of the music-hall, How much education and progress is necessary to effect the change? I wonder whether in a hundred years' time Russian song will have disappeared as it exists now, and whether its place will be taken by the music-hall refrains of London. This is not meant to be said in dispraise of music-halls. I appreciate and immensely enjoy music-hall tunes, especially the tunes of the stately music-halls of England. I think the English people have a genius, which other countries try in

vain to imitate, for creating catching, rhythmical tune mixed with broad and sometimes inspired farce, and their achievements in this province have certainly added to the gaiety of nations, but I am for rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. The music-hall tune is a thing of the town, and songs like the "Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond," "Come o'er the Sea, Charlie," "Ca' the Yowes," "Dans le jardin de mon père," and the songs of the Volga are things of the country, and I think it is melancholy that the latter should disappear and that their place should be usurped entirely by the town-mouse and his music. But perhaps this does not happen.

The climate, when Tzaritsin is passed, grows hotter and hotter, and the breeze made by the steamer only increases the heat. The moon rises and for a while the sky is still tinged with the stain of the sunset in the west, and the water is luminous with a living whiteness. Then, rapidly, because the twilight does not last long here, comes the darkness and with it something strange and wonderful. One is aware of an extraordinary fragrance in the air. It is not merely the sweetness of summer night.

It is a pungent and aromatic incense which pervades the whole atmosphere; warm and delicious and filled with the whole essence of summer. It is intoxicating and comes over one like a great wave, a breath of Elysium; a message, as it were, from the great white fields. And the night with its web of stars, and the dark waters, and the thin line of the far-off banks, make one once more lose all sense of reality. One has reached another world, the nether-world perhaps; one breathes "The scent of alien meadows far away," and one feels as if one were sailing down the river of oblivion to the harbours of Proserpine. And this wonderful sweetness comes, I ascertained, from the new-mown hay, the mowing of which takes place late here. The hay lies in great masses over the steppes, embalming the midnight air and turning the world into paradise.

In reaching Astrakan one is plunged into the atmosphere of the East. On the quays there is an infinite quantity of booths containing every kind of fruit and a coloured herd of people living in the dust and the dirt; splendidly squalid, noisy as parrots, and busy doing nothing, like wasps. The railway to

Astrakan is not yet finished, so one is obliged to return to Tzaritsin by steamer if one wishes to get back to the centre of Russia. I pursued this course; and from Tzaritsin took the train for Tambov. The train started from Tzaritsin at two o'clock in the morning; I arrived at the station at midnight, and at this hour the station was crammed with people. Imagine a huge high waiting-room with three tables d'hôte parallel to each other in the centre of it; at one end of the hall a buffet; on the sides of it under the windows are tables and long seats padded with leather, partitioned off and forming open cubicles. These seats are always occupied, and the occupants go to bed on them, wrapped up in blankets, and propped up by pillows, bags, rugs, baskets, kettles, and other impedimenta. The whole of this refreshment hall is filled with sleeping figures. There are people lying asleep on the window sills and others on chairs placed together. Some merely lay their heads on the table d'hôte, and fall into a profound slumber. It is like the scene in "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," when sleep overtook the inhabitants of the castle. There are a bookstall and a newspaper kiosk.

The bookstall contains—as usual—the works of Jerome K. Jerome and Conan Doyle, some translations of French novels, some political pamphlets, a translation of John Morley's *Compromise*, and an essay on Ruskin—a strange medley of literary food. At the newspaper kiosk the newsvendor is so busily engrossed in reading out a story which had just appeared in the newspapers of how a saintly peasant killed a baby because he thought it was the Antichrist, that it is impossible to get him to pay any attention to one. He is reading out the story to an audience consisting of the policeman, one of the porters, and a kind of sub-guard. The story is, indeed, a curious one, and has caused a considerable stir; and I intend to relate it at a future date.[1]

The journey to Tambov was long; in my carriage was a railway official who drank tea, ate apples, and sighed over the political condition of the country. Everything was as bad as could be. "It is a heavy business," he said, "living in Russia now." Then, after some reflection, he added: "But, perhaps in other countries, in England for instance, people

[1] See page 214.

sometimes find fault with the Government." I told him they did little else. He then took a large roll out of a basket, and, after he had been munching it for some time, he said : "After all there is no country in the world where such good bread can be got as this." And this seemed to console him greatly.

The sunflower season has arrived. Sunflowers are grown in great quantities in Russia, not for ornamental or decorative purposes but for utilitarian purposes. They are grown for the oil that is in them; but besides being useful in many ways they form an article of food. You pick the head of the sunflower and eat the seeds. You bite the seed, spit out the husk, and eat the kernel, which is white and tastes of sunflower. Considerable skill is needed when cracking the husk and spitting it out to leave the kernel intact. This habit is universal among the lower classes in Russia. It occupies a human being like smoking, and it is a pleasant adjunct to contemplation. It is also conducive to untidiness. Nothing is so untidy in the world as a room or a platform littered with sunflower seeds. All platforms in Russia are thus littered at this time of year.

When I was on the steamer at Tzaritsin one of the Cossacks approached me with this question, which seemed startling: "Do you chew seeds?" At first I was at a loss to think what he meant, but I soon remembered the sunflower, and when I had answered in the affirmative he produced a great handful of dried seeds and offered them to me. I had to change three times on the way to my destination, which was the environs of Tambov. During one of the journeys the carriage, a kind of first-class saloon carriage, was occupied by a cashier carrying money, and he had with him two gendarmes with loaded rifles so as to guard him, since assaults on cashiers with the object of robbery are not becoming less frequent. On the small lines the first-class carriages are often saloon carriages in which any seat makes into a bed. When I arrived at my destination I found the country looking intensely green after a wet summer; the weather was boiling hot and the nights had the softness and the sweetness that should belong to the month of June.

SKETCHES IN CENTRAL AND SOUTH RUSSIA

I

THE RELIGION OF RUSSIAN PEASANTS

THE contrast which strikes the traveller who travels directly from Central to Little Russia (which is in the South) is not unlike that of which a traveller would be aware if he went straight from Cambridgeshire or Norfolk to South Devon or Normandy. The season in both places is doing the same thing. The vegetation in the one place is not startingly behindhand or ahead of the vegetation in the other place; autumn in both places has reached the same stage; only in each place it has reached that stage in a different manner. In Central Russia there is a bite in the morning air, a smell of smoke, of damp leaves, of moist brown earth, and a haze hangs before the

tattered trees, which are generously splashed with crimson and gold. In Little Russia the pageant of decay is just as far advanced; but little green remains in the yellow and golden woods; everything is hot and dry; there is no sharpness in the air and no moistness in the earth; summer instead of being conquered by the invading cold seems to be dying like a decadent Roman emperor of excess of splendour and softness and opulence. The contrast in the habitations of man is sharper still. In Central Russia the peasant's house is built of logs and roofed with straw or iron according to the means of the inhabitant. The villages are monotonously and uniformly brown, colourless, and sullen; in the South the houses are white or pale green; these are surrounded with orchards and fruit trees; they often possess the luxury of glass verandahs; there is something well-to-do and smiling about them, something which recalls the whitewashed, straw-thatched cottages of South Devon, or the farms in Normandy, and all the delicious things which the French language conveys and suggests better than any other, since it is lighter; for in a few words, such as—

"Dans le jardin de mon père
Les lilas ont fleuri."

It conjures up endless vistas of joyousness, gaiety, and sunshine.

When people generalise about the intense misery of the Russian peasants, the squalor in which they live, they should remember that Russia is a large country; that it possesses a north, a south, an east, and a west, and that what is true about one place is quite untrue about another. So that in one village the peasants may be starving for want of bread, and a hundred miles to the north or south you may find a village where the peasants have spent 300,000 roubles (£30,000) in building an enormous church, which is the case in the village of Lamki, government of Tambov, and there the church stands, towering and immense, built entirely by the voluntary contributions of peasants, to witness if I lie.

Tennyson, I think, says something about the North being dark and tender and true, and the South false and fickle. I asked a Little Russian gentleman what the main differences were between Little Russians and Big Russians, and he said the Little Russians were more

decent people but far lazier than the Big Russians; that the Little Russian was so lazy that he would say to his wife: "Little wife, say 'woa' to my horse; I have a pain in my tongue."

On the other hand, I asked a Muscovite who lived in Little Russia, who told me that he infinitely preferred to deal with Big Russians, but that the Little Russians were perhaps cleverer, though they would pretend to be stupid out of laziness. On the score of indolence everybody seemed to be agreed. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any great burst of energy in a country where the sun is so hot in October and the air so mild and so heavily charged with sunny indolence.

The country in the government of Kharkov was in distress owing to the want of rain; special services were being held in the village square praying for rain, because if the drought continues next year's harvest will be ruined, and it is impossible at the present moment to sow. The dryness of the autumn in the government of Kharkov, which was threatening distress and disaster for the future, was in the meantime adding to the beauty of the present. The

woods were harmonies in many-coloured golds; the nights were not yet cold, and every evening the sun sank in a cloudless halo of golden dust, making the yellow trees shine like the banners in a cathedral, as though they were the trophies of a triumphant conqueror instead of the last tattered remnants of the robe of a dying king. The little farms painted pale green are clean inside as they are outside. The walls are painted red and blue; the furniture is neatly arranged, and no poultry live in the living-room. Contrary to my expectations the inhabitants, instead of being dressed in their gloriously picturesque South Russian costumes, are far less striking to look at than the inhabitants of Central Russia, and they looked as if they had ordered their clothes from Birmingham or Manchester. The reason of this is the prevalence of large factories in this region, which spread education, civilisation, and the shirt and collars of the "intelligent" middle class. Every now and then, however, you see something which appeals more strongly to that which is primeval in you than to that which is progressive; a thing which may distress the theorising Socialist spirit in you, if you possess it, and

please that which in you hankers towards Homer, *Puss in Boots*, and the elementary needs of the human heart. I saw just such a thing. It was a blind beggar. He was sitting on a hill in front of a church, and he was playing an instrument called a "lira," that is to say, a lyre. But the lyre was not what you imagine when you think of pictures of the lyre of Orpheus or of Apollo. It was a wooden instrument shaped exactly like a violin. It had three strings, which were tuned with pegs like a violin, but it was played by fingering wooden keys, like those of a large concertina and by at the same time turning a handle which protruded from the base of the violin. The musician said he could play any kind of music, sad, joyous, and sacred, and he gave examples of all three of the various styles; they were to my ear indistinguishable in kind; they appeared to me all tinged with the same quick and deliciously plaintive melancholy, and the *kind* of music made by this instrument instantly suggested that which Schubert has rendered in the accompaniment of a song called "Der Leiermann": the plaintive comfortable noise of the very first organ-grinders. But

what I wondered at the time was this. Is the instrument, the sound of which Schubert renders in his song "Der Leiermann," this very identical "lyre" which my blind beggar was playing in the village Giebko, government of Kharkov? Or is Schubert just imitating the noise of the earliest portable grinding organs, whose music is made by wind proceeding from a bellows into a small box and thence into pipes, and whose principle of construction is exactly the same, though the scale is different, as that of the organ in St. Paul's Cathedral? In any case the noise made by this "lyre" was the same in kind as the noise which Schubert imitates in the accompaniment of his song "Der Leiermann." I afterwards ascertained that this instrument is called Leierkasten in Germany, *Vielle* in France, and Hurdy-gurdy in English, and that my blind beggar must have been identical with Schubert's Leiermann.

Another slight episode which gave me food for reflection happened in the train on a small line between the town of Kharkov and a neighbouring village. I was going to the town of Kharkov for the day; it was only half an hour's

journey. I was in a third-class carriage ; there were not many passengers, and most of them were railway guards off duty, two peasants, a soldier, and a monk. The monk had no sooner entered the carriage than he began a theological discussion. Now, as soon as the train started, although I was sitting quite close, I could not unfortunately follow the intricacies of his argument for the noise made by the train, but whenever the train stopped at a station his words were plain. And the drift of the matter was this : that all the passengers in the carriage were uniting to express to him in forcible language that priests in general, and monks still more (and himself in particular), were lazy, worthless, good-for-nothing scoundrels, and deceivers into the bargain. The soldier said, and his words received universal approval, that every one who was not a born fool knew that there was one God, the same for everybody, and that all men were equal before Him, and that consequently there could be only one real religious faith (namely, a belief in God), and that all the rest was the invention of priests. By "the rest" it subsequently became plain that he meant the Devil and the tenets of the Orthodox Church

in general and of any other Churches. The monk, on the other hand, said that the Devil was intensely real, and that every man was followed by angels, who were constantly fighting the Devil for the soul of the man. Now, the soldier, and three guards off duty who were taking part in this discussion, starting from the premise that there is only one God, one faith which consists in the belief in this one God, and that all priests are liars, worried the monk with questions and attacked him in every possible manner. They accused him of begging in the first place; they would be ashamed of doing such a thing, they said. Then the soldier asked him if he had seen the Devil. The monk said, "Yes, often." "Where is he?" said the soldier. "It would be most interesting to see him."

Then when the monk stood up for the Orthodox faith the soldier said: "You say it is the only faith. You lie, because I have been told there are any number of other Churches, and each of them says its faith is the true one. For instance, the Jews have an entirely different faith, and this proves that all priests are liars; because God is the same for everybody."

At last the monk said that everybody attacked him and nobody stuck up for him, and he retired into another corner of the carriage, followed by the soldier, who went on with the argument, and afterwards repeated his main thesis to me separately, namely, that all priests were deceivers, because God is the same for everybody. Therefore there could be only one religious belief were it not for the lies of priests. But what struck me in this matter is a thing which has repeatedly struck me among Russians of the lower class, namely, their broad common sense in religious matters. "Mysticism," Mr. Chesterton once wrote, "was with Carlyle as with all its genuine professors only a transcendent form of common sense. Mysticism and common sense alike consist in a sense of the dominance of certain truths which cannot be formally demonstrated." Now the Russians of the lower class seem to me often the genuine professors of mysticism, because their mysticism is simply common sense. And it is this very fact which seems to me to lead people astray when they discuss the religion of the Russian peasant. For instance, you

often hear people bewail the *superstition* of the peasant which makes him devote so much attention to paper and wooden images. Again, I have read in an English book on the Russian peasant that the peasant's habit of perpetually crossing himself, his respect for images, and his prayers are purely mechanical and therefore meaningless, because they are often interrupted by, or simultaneous with, jokes, laughter, and the business of life. Now this union of the practice of the outward signs of religion with the business of every-day life, this interruption of a prayer by a conversation, this sign of the cross made before a theft seem to me all to derive from the broad common sense which is at the root of their belief, and which, as Mr. Chesterton says, is synonymous with mysticism.

Because if your belief in God is solid and based on great rocks of common sense it is not extraordinary that your outward expression of your allegiance to the great fact should be mechanical. For instance, if you are the loyal subject of the King, you mechanically take off your hat when he drives past you in the street or when you see the colours of his

Army go by, and nobody says, if at that moment you happen to be whistling a comic song or thinking of the North Pole, that your action is hypocritical, insincere, or meaningless. But it is exactly the same in the case of the peasants; the outward expression of their religion is as mechanical as possible, but it is mechanical because their religious feeling is true and right and not because it is insincere and false.

I will end by telling two stories which exemplify the common sense which lies at the root of the Russian peasant's religion. The first story happened at Kharbin. It was Easter, and the soldiers wanted Mass said for them. There were two priests. One priest had been engaged by some officers and the second priest was drunk. A soldier was relating these facts, and some asked: "Well, did you have to go without your Mass?" "Oh, no," said the soldier, "we went to the priest who was drunk and we pulled him out of bed, and we said: 'Say Mass, you devil' (and a lot more uncomplimentary expressions), and he said Mass." This story shows that the soldiers regarded the priest partly as an

instrument to say Mass and partly as a man. They differentiated between the two, and the instrument had to perform its divine office whatever happened to the man, whose good or bad qualities had nothing to do with the case. This seems to me gloriously sensible.

The second story happened somewhere down in this government. A Socialist arrived in a village to convert the inhabitants to Socialism. He wanted to prove that all men were equal and that the Government authorities had no right to their authority. Consequently he thought he would begin by disproving the existence of God, because if he proved that there was no God, it would naturally follow that there should be no Emperor and no policemen. So he took a holy image, and said: "There is no God, and I will prove it immediately. I will spit upon this image and break it to bits, and if there is a God he will send fire from heaven and kill me, and if there is no God nothing will happen to me at all." Then he took the image and spat upon it and broke it to bits, and he said to the peasants: "You see God has not killed me." "No," said the peasants,

"God has not killed you, but we will," and they killed him. And thus an act was committed which was one of common sense or of mysticism.

II

A CONVERSATION WITH A LANDOWNER

IN a small wooden house at the edge of a large wood, and within a stone's-throw of a river which floods the whole of the neighbouring meadows in the spring-time, lives Feodor Petrovitch X——. He is what is called in Russia a small landowner. He is a Moderate Liberal. That is to say, for twenty years he has groaned and lamented at the foolish proceedings of the Russian Government, which he used to accuse of criminal levity. He is in favour of a policy of common sense. Therefore, in the rapid course of recent events he has veered, like many others, slightly to the Right; although he still calls himself a Constitutional Democrat. And this is not because his faith in the existing Government has increased or that his ideal, which consists in the carrying out of

certain drastic reforms, has diminished, but because he is dissatisfied with the conduct of the Opposition. Nevertheless, he means to vote for the Constitutional Democrats at the coming election. He is a short, dark, middle-aged man, not scrupulously shaven, with a brown glittering eye and a great flow of talk. He has immense practical knowledge of farming, machinery, and manufactories. At the same time he likes talking literature and politics, and his opinions are worth listening to except when he tells shooting stories; in this region he is given to such gross exaggeration that many people cease to pay attention to what he says on other subjects which excite his interest but not his imagination.

I was drinking tea with him the other afternoon and talking over the Anglo-Russian Agreement. "This is the only sensible thing," he said, "which the Russian Government has done for the last forty years." And then the conversation veered on to the plays in Moscow and the latest productions in the world of literature.

Here I wish to make a long parenthesis. One of the most striking features among

educated Russians of all classes, whether landowners, doctors, lawyers, or officials, is the prevalence of what is called "culture." We consider "culture" as a luxury—something extra, a pleasant appendage to education. The Russians consider culture and education to be synonymous and "culture" to be indispensable. In their eyes what they call a "cultured" and we call an educated man must possess a certain wide general knowledge. He must be able to talk authoritatively on literature, science, and the arts, the European stage, etc. He is positively ashamed if he is caught ignorant of some one like Sudermann or Finsen or Grieg. I have often seen Russians amazed and aghast at the "unculturedness" of Englishmen who have taken their degree at a University. This is not surprising considering that for two or three generations boys in England no longer receive any kind of instruction at schools. To the educated Russian, a certain wide layer of general knowledge is considered absolutely indispensable. He is ashamed to be without it. You meet with extraordinary examples of this very

often. For instance, I once knew a Cossack officer who was well known for the rows he made in restaurants, for letting off pistols at odd moments, and for fighting duels. He was what is called in Russia a "skandalist" (a row-maker). This same man, I afterwards found out, had written a most valuable work on the differential calculus, and was one of the most brilliant of modern mathematicians. Now this indispensable "culture" has its good sides, but it has its bad sides also. It is often exaggerated in Russia just as ignorance is exaggerated in England. In many cases what is called "culture" and what is considered to be indispensable, is not culture at all, but a terribly superficial smattering of thin-spread information, possessing which its owner considers he has the right and even the duty of pronouncing an arbitrary and final judgment on a subject of which he knows nothing. I once knew an official employed in business in Moscow who was perfectly aghast because he discovered I knew nothing, that I had not even the shadow of pretence to any kind or sort of knowledge of natural science, that I was ignorant and not ashamed of being

ignorant, of the elementary principles of dynamics. This same official, secure of his position in what he considered a universal field of "culture," told me that Browning's "Ring and the Book" was an old-fashioned, milk-and-water poem, rather like one of Trollope's novels, and that Browning was a writer who was all sound and no sense, a victim to a fatal fluency and an incredible facility of expression. The result, therefore, of this culture is that in some cases it makes the man genuinely many sided and widely appreciative, and in others, as in the case I have just quoted, it leads him to express opinions of the kind which the French call *saugrenu*.

To go back to Feodor Petrovitch. He is saturated with so-called "culture." In his case it is in many respects not superficial at all. He knows exactly how to manage a starch factory, not only how to manage it, but how every part of the machine is made and worked. He has practical knowledge of agriculture; he is an excellent economist. Besides this he has travelled and understands English, German, and French; he is well acquainted with

Dickens, Thackeray, Shakespeare, and Mrs. Humphry Ward, with Beaumarchais and Ibsen, and, of course, it goes without saying, after what I have related, that a thorough knowledge of the Russian classics is an absolutely indispensable part of "culture." I happened to mention to Feodor Petrovitch that a discussion had lately been raging in the *Morning Post* as to the comparative merits of modern and ancient literature and I asked him on what side the balance of opinion would fall if a similar discussion were to be held in Russia. "Russian literature at the present moment," he said, "is leaping along with the force of a strong stream, but it is impossible to point to any one author of the younger generation who is worthy to take his place side by side with the older giants." "But," I asked, "with regard to those same giants, is the general opinion the same as what it was thirty years ago? For instance, do the younger generation admire Tolstoi, Tourgenieff, Gogol, and Dostoievski as much as their fathers did, or are there people who cannot read Gogol and Tourgenieff just as in England there are people who cannot read Dickens and

Thackeray?" "The younger generation," he answered, "have read all the classics; they find no difficulty in doing that, and of course it is difficult to generalise on subjects which are, after all, matters of taste; but I think you will find many Russians not only of the young generation who on reading or re-reading Tourgenieff are acutely disappointed." "I have just read an interesting and admirably-written article in an English newspaper," I answered, "in which it is said that as a psychologist pure and simple Tourgenieff is superior to Tolstoi—that he is a writer for the aristocracy of taste, not for the general public, and that not to know him is not to have penetrated into the best society. The author quotes Renan and George Sand to back him up, and says, moreover, that his artistic form is superior to that of Tolstoi, Daudet, and even Flaubert."

"When the writer said that Tourgenieff was not for the general public, he meant, of course, the English or the French general public," said Feodor Petrovitch. "In Russia his novels are read by every schoolboy; they are generally the first grown-up books to be read

by young boys and girls at school. We have all read Tourgenieff in our youth, and we have all come under his spell as a writer. But to many of us, and certainly to me when I read him now, much of the glamour has gone. The beauty of style remains. And first and foremost, I consider Tourgenieff to be a poet. The books of his which give me the most pleasure are *The Poems in Prose*, *The Sportsmen's Sketches*, and *Spring Waters*. These works seem to me incomparable for their harmony and many-sided beauty. Besides being a poet Tourgenieff was a chronicler of his time; but he has always seemed to be more a chronicler of the atmosphere of the epoch he deals with than a portrait painter of the human beings that crowded it—I mean a portrait painter like Velasquez and not a writer of *romans à clef*. Of course, his characters are living, but to me they are living as the characters in Trollope's novels are living. They are people who existed in an imaginary world, and that imaginary world has the atmosphere of the Sixties. But with Tolstoi the case is different; he gives you the human beings who did actually exist. You

know that what he described happened. I do not mean to say that he was a photographer, but an artist of the calibre of Velasquez; he recreated a world and made the human beings which he put into it breathe and live and speak as they actually did in real life. Tourgenieff's novels at their best are novels. One knows quite well that *Smoke* never happened. On the other hand, we know that the doings and sayings of Pierre, and Levin, and Natasha, and Dolly are as true as the doings of Dr. Johnson and Pepys, or as true as the sayings and doings of any of our acquaintances. For this reason, I don't care a fig for Tourgenieff's psychology.

"When my contemporaries and I," Feodor Petrovitch added, "first read the novels of Tourgenieff we were carried off our feet by the skill and magic of a new and great artist. To us it was all new. When I read him now, I admire *Poems in Prose* and *The Sportsmen's Sketches* as much as I used to do, and I am still enchanted by his incomparable style. But the matter seems hopelessly old-fashioned. Just that which seemed so new and so daring seems to me now like mahogany furniture, crinolines, Octave Feuillet, the Second Empire,

and all that is what you call 'Early Victorian.' And nine-tenths of his characters seem to me to be *clichés*. We know all that. We have got beyond it. What we shall never get beyond is the poet in Tourgenieff, his apprehension of certain shades and values of beauty in nature and life, and his expression of it in matchless prose. In this respect he seems to me indeed superior to Flaubert and the French in that Tourgenieff is a poet; but on the other hand I find *Madame Bovary* infinitely more interesting than *Virgin Soil* or *Smoke* on account of its relation to real life, which seems to me far closer; the Frenchman's work is, I think, more vital, more real, and more true. *Virgin Soil* is, I think, a collection of conventional characters, or rather caricatures who bear really no relation to the period represented. And hence I consider Dostoievski so infinitely superior to Tourgenieff. In his book called *Devils* he gives you a picture of the same epoch; the surroundings he invents are as fantastic as a picture thrown on the screen by a magic lantern; but the human beings, the naked souls of which he lays bare to you, how poignantly and terribly

real they are! Tolstoi shows you life as it is, Tourgenieff life as one can imagine it, only he imagines it with the genius and skill of an artist; but Dostoievski leads you, as Virgil lead Dante, through the smoky regions which lie between the real and the unreal, regions which we all know; and although he was not a stylist, not an artist like Tourgenieff, yet in laying bare the human soul and revealing all its darkness and all its light he was without an equal. Of course, as I said, it is absurd to generalise on such things, which are matters of taste, but I am sure you will find many Russians who think that Tourgenieff is old-fashioned as a novelist, though immortal as a poet, and very few who would place him above Tolstoi or Dostoievski."

Then he went on to talk of other things.

III

THE BIRTH OF THE BELL

WHEN I arrived at the village of A——, in the government of Tambov, after an endless journey in a train which went three miles an hour and stopped for an indeterminate

period, never less than an hour and a half, at every station, I found a large crowd at the station gathered round a pillar of smoke and flame. One's first impression was, of course, that a village fire was going on. Fires in Russian villages are common occurrences in the summer, and this is not surprising since the majority of the houses are thatched with straw. The houses are in close proximity one to another, and the ground is littered with straw. Moreover, to set fire to one's neighbour's house is a common form of paying off a score. But it was not a fire that was in progress. It was the casting of a bell which was to take place. The ceremony was fixed for four o'clock in the afternoon with due solemnity and with religious rites, and I was invited to be present.

"Heute muss die Glocke werden"

wrote Schiller in his famous poem, and here the words were appropriate. To-day the bell was to be. It was a blazing hot day. The air was dry, the ground was dry, everything was dry, and the great column of smoke mixed with flame issuing from the furnace added to the heat. The furnace had been made exactly

opposite to the church. The church was a stone building with a Doric portico consisting of four red columns, a white pediment, a circular pale green roof, and a Byzantine minaret. The village consisted of wooden log-built cottages thatched with straw dotted over a rolling plain. The plain was variegated with woods—oak trees and birch being their principal trees—and stretched out infinitely into the blue distance. Before the bell was to be cast a Te Deum was to be sung.

It was Wednesday, the day of the bazaar. The bazaar in the village is the mart, where the buying and selling of meat, provisions, fruit, melons, fish, hardware, ironmongery, china, and books are conducted. This takes place once a week on Wednesdays, and peasants flock in from the neighbouring villages to buy their provisions. But this afternoon the bazaar was deserted. The whole population of the village was gathered together on the dry brown grassy square in front of the church to take part in the ceremony. At four o'clock two priests and a deacon, followed by a choir consisting of two men in their Sunday clothes, and by bearers of

gilt banners, walked in procession out of the church. They were dressed in stiff robes of green and gold, and as they walked they intoned a plain song. An old card table with its stained green cloth was placed and opened on the ground opposite and not far from the church, and on this two lighted tapers were set together with a bowl of holy water. The peasants gathered round in a semicircle with bare heads and joined in the service, making countless genuflexions and signs of the cross, and joining in the song with their deep bass voices. When I said the peasants I should have said half of them. The other half were gathered in a dense crowd round the furnace, which was built of bricks and open on both sides to the east and to the west, and fed with wooden fuel. The men in charge of the proceeding stood on both sides of it and stirred the molten metal it contained with two enormous poles. On the southern side of the furnace was a channel through which the molten metal when released was to flow into the cast of the bell. The crowd which was assembled here was already struggling to have and to hold a good place for the spectacle

of the release of the metal when the solemn moment should arrive. Three policemen were endeavouring to cope with the crowd; that is to say, one police officer, one police sergeant, and one common policeman. They were trying with all their might to keep back the crowd, so that when the metal was released a disaster should not happen; but their efforts were in vain, because the crowd was large, and when they pressed back a small portion of it they made a dent in it which caused the remaining part of it to bulge out; and it was the kind of crowd—so intensely typical of Russia—on which no words, whether of command, entreaty, or threat, made the smallest impression. The only way to keep it back was by pressing on it with the body and outstretched arms, and that only kept back a tiny portion of it. In the meantime the Te Deum went on and on; and many things and persons were prayed for besides the bell which was about to be born. At one moment I obtained a place from which I had a commanding view of the furnace, but I was soon oozed out of it by the ever-increasing crowd of men, women, and children.

The aspect of the whole thing was something between a sacred picture and a scene in a Wagner opera. The tall peasants with red shirts, long hair and beards, stirring the furnace with long poles, looked the persons in the epic of the Niebelungen as we see it performed on the stage to the strains of a complicated orchestration. There was Wotan in a blue shirt, with a spear; and Alberic, with a grimy face and a hammer, was meddling with the furnace, and Siegfried, in leather boots and sheepskin, was smoking a cigarette and waving an enormous hammer, while Mimi, whining and disagreeable as usual, was having his head smacked. On the other hand, the peasants who were listening and taking part in the Te Deum were like the figures of a sacred picture —women with red and white Eastern headdresses, bearded men, listening as though a miracle were about to be performed, and barefooted children with straw coloured hair and blue eyes running about everywhere. Towards six o'clock the Te Deum at last came to an end, and the whole crowd moved and swayed around the furnace. A Russian crowd is like a large tough sponge. Nothing seems to make any

effect on it. It absorbs the newcomers who dive into it, and you can pull it this way and press it that way, but there it remains, indissoluble, passive, and obstinate. Perhaps the same is true of the Russian nation; I think it is certainly true of the Russian character, in which as fundamental qualities there are so much apparent weakness and softness, so much obvious elasticity and malleability, and so much hidden passive resistance.

I asked a peasant who was sitting by a railing under the church when the ceremony would begin. "Ask them," he answered, "they will tell you, but they won't tell us." With the help of the policeman I managed to squeeze a way through the mass of struggling humanity to a place in the first row. I was told that the critical moment was approaching, and was asked to throw a piece of silver into the furnace, so that the bell might have a tuneful sound. I threw a silver rouble into the furnace, and then the men who were in charge of the casting said that the critical moment had come. On each side of the small channel they fixed metal screens and placed a large screen facing it. Then the man in charge

said in a loud matter-of-fact tone: "Now, let us pray to God." The peasants all uncovered themselves and made a sign of the cross, and a moment was spent in silent prayer. This prayer was especially for the success of the operation which was to take place immediately, namely, the release of the molten metal, since two hours had already been spent in praying for the bell. At this moment the excitement of the crowd reached such a pitch that they pushed themselves right up to the channel, and the efforts of the policemen, who were pouring down with perspiration and stretching out in vain, like the ghosts in Virgil, their futile arms, were pathetic. One man, however, not a policeman, waved a big stick and threatened to beat everybody back if they did not make way. Then at last the culminating moment arrived, the metal was released, and it poured down the narrow channel which had been prepared for it, and over which two logs placed crosswise formed an arch, surmounted by a yachting cap for ornament. It caused a huge yellow sheet of flame to flare up for a moment in front of the iron screen facing the channel. The women in the crowd shrieked. Those

who were in front made a desperate effort to get back, and those who were at the back made a desperate effort to get forward, and I was carried right through and beyond the crowd in the struggle.

And the bell was born. I hope the silver rouble which I threw into it, and which now forms a part of it, will sweeten its utterance, and that it may never have to sound the alarm which signifies battle, murder, and sudden death.

CONVERSATIONS WITH DIMITRI NIKOLAIEVITCH

I

ENGLISH LIBERALS IN RUSSIA

"WHILE you were away," said Dimitri Nikolaievitch A——, "I had several long conversations with a young Englishman who had come over here to have a glimpse of the Revolution and to express his sympathy with the oppressed. He was an ardent Liberal, and he had a fine *doctrinaire* spirit, so that although he was considerably disappointed with what he saw, or, rather, with what he did not see, his theories on Russian politics were unshaken by the facts he observed. And he remained entrenched within them as in the walls of a strong fortress. He interested me greatly, first, because he proved to me that a pet theory of mine was wrong, that no English-

man is a Liberal, and, secondly, he showed me how difficult it must be for people living in England, and unacquainted with Russian life, to form a correct estimate of what is going on here.

"He talked with burning indignation of the Bureaucrats and with hope of the dawn of liberty in Russia, and the awakening giant and the ferociousness of Ministers, and when I said that the only difference between the Kadet reformers and the Bureaucrats was that the Bureaucrats formed part of the Civil Service and the Kadet reformers did not, although some of them have done so in the past, he did not understand what I meant. And yet the matter is one which any Englishman who can understand Bernard Shaw's play, *John Bull's Other Island*, ought to be able to grasp. In *John Bull's Other Island*, Bernard Shaw has shown exactly how an English Liberal fails to understand the Irish question. Now, an English Liberal misunderstands the Russian question in exactly the same way as he misunderstands the Irish question. He comes to Russia bursting with indignation, and burning with enthusiasm for the cause of liberty, and he

meets with polite sympathy from the Russians who, while they respect the trend and the violence of his opinions, inwardly smile at his misapprehension, his complete inability to comprehend the nature of the case. The Liberal then goes back to England and writes a book in which in lurid colours he paints the distress of the distressful country, and in which he confuses utterly the evils arising from a complicated, antiquated, and incompetent system of administration with those due to original sin.

"I mean that in his book he is capable of saying, 'Russia is such a terrible country that if a convict fells a warder he is flogged.' He talks of the bloodthirsty Bureaucrats and the iron-fisted Governors, and then of the Russian Liberals as if they belonged to an entirely different race of people, as if, for instance, they possessed the qualities, and those only, which are special to the admirable British middle-class. Now, just think of this question of Bureaucracy for a moment. To talk of the bloodthirsty race of Bureaucrats is absurd. Nine-tenths of educated Russians are Bureaucrats, and the majority of these Bureaucrats

are probably Liberals and would vote for the Kadets unless it were too inconvenient. Some of the higher officials among these same Bureaucrats have often admittedly been excellent men ; in any case there is no difference of kind between the Russian who is a high official or a small public servant and the Russian who is a doctor, a lawyer, a political agitator, a novelist, an actor, or an anarchist.

"Where, then, is the mischief? The mischief is in the system, and the misunderstanding arises from a misuse of words, which in its turn is caused by a disinclination to think clearly. When people say Bureaucracy they mean Autocracy. Russia is governed by the autocratic system, and an Autocracy, unless, as happens every now and then in the course of centuries, the autocrat is a man of genius like Peter the Great, Cromwell, or Napoleon, means this, that the country governed by an autocrat is governed in reality by a mass of officials, who claim that they are directly responsible to the monarch, and who are at the same time considered to be responsible to the monarch's Ministers. They end by being responsible to nobody, since the people who are set beneath

them can complain of them to those who are in authority over them, and therefore not one of them, from the lowest telegraph clerk to the Prime Minister, is sure of his position, because the Prime Minister can be sent away at a moment's notice, according to the Sovereign's whim. The result of this is that the individual counts for nothing, and the better the Bureaucrat the more hopeless his position, since there is no guarantee for the laws being enforced, and when a people sees that sometimes the laws are enforced, and at others they are not, according to circumstances, and according to the nature and rank of the persons they affect, they become less inclined to obey the laws. Therefore, what Russia is suffering from is not want of liberty, but want of law. In Russia we have the licence of the Press, and the power of suppressing newspapers. What we want is order. Now, lots of Russians argue that the autocratic system and its attendant lawlessness are simply the inevitable result of the Russian character, out of which it has grown. I should be more inclined to believe this if exactly the same system had not existed in France and been subsequently destroyed,

and if the autocratic system in Russia were a very ancient instead of a comparatively modern institution borrowed from Germany by an eccentric man of genius who forced it on a backward and ignorant people. I mean Peter the Great.

"Again, many Russians argue thus: 'In England, in spite of all their Habeas Corpus, Bills of Right, etc., officials do lawless things in Egypt, and innocent people are put in prison for mutilating horses.' This argument seems to me fallacious. The point being not that the Habeas Corpus is an infallible guarantee against lawlessness in England, but that were there no Habeas Corpus in England things would be much worse than they are at present. There was once a French priest who, when he heard the Republic abused for all its vices and faults, answered: 'Tout de même si les institutions libérales disparaissaient, nous les regrettrions.' And I consider that if by any chance Liberal Institutions were established in Russia we should not groan beneath them. So you see I am not a Liberal but a radical. I am in favour of radical change. In spite of that, the sympathy of Liberals in other countries, even

that of the Bishop of Hereford, fails either to move, to console, or to encourage me.

"At the beginning of the French Revolution the English Liberals felt much sympathy with the French Reformers, and a sword of honour was sent by the French tribunes to the 'citoyens' who were then Ministers in England; but when the French Revolution moved onwards towards its logical close, the disgust of the English Liberals knew no bounds, and Burke made his disapprobation immortal in burning prose. Therefore, when the revolutionaries here begin to get the upper hand I shall advise them to pause before sending a sword of honour to 'Citoyen' Hereford, 'Citoyen' Jaurès, and 'Citoyen' Keir Hardy, lest when all Russia is in flames and the rentes have sunk to nothing and the red flag flies from the Winter Palace, the Bishop from the pulpit, M. Jaurès in the Chamber of Deputies, and Mr. Keir Hardy in the House of Commons, rise to point out—safeguarding themselves with conjunctions as is the habit of political speakers — that although nobody sympathises more than they do with Liberal ideas, nevertheless, to repudiate foreign

loans, and to cut off Professor Milioukov's head, and to throw all the Kadets and the moderate Liberals and even the more moderate Socialists into the Neva, is going too far, and for such actions they cannot overstate their deprecation."

II

BYRON

LAST night I went to see my old friend Dimitri Nikolaievitch A——. I found him, as usual, in the little den which he shares with a bullfinch, a lizard, and a fox terrier on the sixth floor of a huge sordid barrack. As usual, he was smoking, and there was a lack of buttons on his coat.

"So you've come to talk politics," he said, "and I am not going to talk politics with you. I am going to talk literature with you—a far more interesting subject. No Russian knows anything about politics or really cares about politics; we are an artistic (I mean artistic, not æsthetic) nation; we have been forced to take notice of politics because our Government went just beyond the limit of incapacity and general

idiocy that a nation can stand; but that does not make our political ideas any the more interesting. Whereas our ideas on literature are really interesting, because all the defects of our nature, owing to which we are such bad politicians, help to make us good judges of literature. We have neither the sublime and contented ignorance of the British, nor the Chinese Wall-like narrow-mindedness of the French, nor the complicated misapprehension of the Teutons; we are absolutely open-minded and catholic; we can understand and assimilate everything and anything; there is no hard bar in our nature; it is all plastic, pliant, and receptive. There is nothing we cannot appreciate; a Frenchman — even an extremely clever Frenchman like M. Bourget — cannot possibly appreciate either the humour or the style or the point of a Scotch writer of genius such as Stevenson or the works of Jacobs or a book like the *Diary of a Nobody*. We can; that's the difference. That is why our politicians are so bad and our non-politicians so intelligent." "That is all very well," I answered, "but I have to write political letters to my newspaper and I want

your views—people in England prefer politics to literature." "I quite understand that," answered Dimitri Nikolaievitch, "but for all that I refuse to talk politics to-day. I am going to talk to you about Byron, a subject which few Englishmen are interested in, I believe, and if what I say won't do for a political letter send it to the literary page of your newspaper. In the *Morning Post*, which I take in in the hope of seeing my name mentioned now and then, I noticed that one of the most delightful of English writers, Mr. Andrew Lang, lately raised the question as to who was right about Byron, his detractors or the people who praised him. Now, it is an odd thing, which I have noticed, that people accept their likes and dislikes about most things with decent resignation. If they don't like chicken or roast beef or Mozart's music, or Rembrandt's pictures, or Homer's verse, they say so and pass on. Not so with Shakespeare and Byron. These two authors have the effect which a red rag has on a bull on the people who dislike them. If a man dislikes Shakespeare he feels it incumbent on himself to proclaim the fact on the housetops,

as though it were a great discovery, oblivious of the fact that people and literature are like a Seidlitz powder, the man must have the complementary blue powder which when mixed with the white powder of the book produces a fizzing combustion in a glass of water. Count Tolstoi being without the blue powder that makes Shakespeare fizz for him has to write a book in which he explains that Shakespeare knows nothing of human nature and could not draw a living character. This does not damage Shakespeare's reputation as a playwright, but it destroys Count Tolstoi's reputation as a critic. Byron produces the same effect; people who dislike Byron get very angry if one says that he is a great poet, and quote you a long list of the errors in syntax which are to be found in his works. Now, the reason I want to talk about Byron is that being a foreigner and living far off from the literary fashions of London, far from the catch-words and quarrels of cliques and coteries, I am a much more impartial judge of Byron than any Englishman can be. The obvious retort to this is that foreigners admire Byron because they cannot appreciate the

nicety, the lights and shades, the values of the English language. In my case you will admit the argument does not hold good; to a Russian who knows English from his childhood and has a knowledge and appreciation of the world's literature, the manipulation of the English language and the apprehension of its values is child's play compared to the manipulation of the Russian language. The argument of a foreigner's inability to appreciate the values of the language may be true of a Frenchman or of a German; it is not true of an Italian critic such as Nencioni, who translated Browning, nor is it true of a Russian critic such as myself, who has run to seed and made a hash of life from having appreciated literature and the arts wisely and too well, and has, thank heavens, written nothing at all. To go back to Byron, the mistake people make with regard to him seems to me that they judge him by a wrong standard. They apply to him the standards which appertain to other things. To judge Byron by the standard of Tennyson is like criticising Michael Angelo by the standard of Benvenuto Cellini. They apply a magnifying glass to the picture, at

which they should look from a distance of several yards. They criticise a frieze as if it were a carved cherry-stone. To this I reply that other men such as Goethe judge him by the standard of Shakespeare, and criticise him with the finest discrimination and find him good.

"Read all that Goethe says about Byron in 'Eckerman,' not merely the oft-quoted phrases of his being the greatest genius of the nineteenth century, but all his *obiter dicta* with regard to Byron, and you will be struck by their profound wisdom and incredible acuteness.

"But a better reply is to quote what is perhaps the most hackneyed of hackneyed Byronic quotations, two stanzas of which I learned in the nursery, but which, I dare say, you have never read—

CXL

'I see before me the Gladiator lie:
He leans upon his hand—his manly brow
Consents to death, but conquers agony,
And his droop'd head sinks gradually low—
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,

Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
The arena swims around him; he is gone,
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hail'd the wretch who won.

CXLI

He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away;
He reck'd not of the life he lost nor prize,
But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,
Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday—
All this rush'd with his blood—Shall he expire,
And unavenged?—Arise! ye Goths, and glut your ire!'

"By so doing I may be applying the wrong test myself, since it is a commonplace of criticism that Byron must be judged by the whole and not by fragments; but I maintain that just as if some one were to examine a limb hacked off a statue by Michael Angelo or a horse's head from the Parthenon frieze he would say the hand who wrought such a fragment was a mighty hand; so it is with this short quotation; it is impossible to read it without being convinced that the man who wrote it was more than a 'clever man.' He was a poet. He was a great poet. Because to have said—

'his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away,'

in this connection signifies that he had the gift by the use of the simplest possible and most ordinary words of piercing the heart and brain with the divine stab which only great poetry can inflict.

"Other poets can do other things. But because Virgil and Keats touch you with a wand that produces a ravishing enchantment, because Shelley and Coleridge lift you into unimagined heavens of light and music, because Shakespeare takes your breath away by the potent magic of his phrases, that does not prove that Byron has not in his fashion achieved what is generally accepted as being one of the highest achievements of poetry: that is to say, the achievement of making style disappear and of knocking you on the head with poetry made out of the language of every day.

"Goethe is usually thought to be a great poet. But Goethe's claim to greatness as a poet rests on this achievement, on nothing less and on nothing more. When he is at his best, as in the first part of *Faust* and in a

dozen lyrics, he gets beyond and above style and writes—

'Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh,'

or

'Mein Ruh ist hin,'

or

'Wer nie sein Brot mit Thränen ass,'

or

'Von wem Ich's habe, dass sag Ich Euch nicht,'

or

'Denkt Ihr an mich ein Augenblickchen nur,'

or

'Es war ein König in Thule,'

or

'Heiss mich nicht reden, heiss mich schweigen,'

and the world agrees that when he writes like this he is 'grand comme le monde.' Nobody disputes the fact because he wrote masses and masses of inferior work. The point is that only a very great poet could have written

'Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh,'

and the rest.

"I maintain that only a great poet could have written the 'Dying Gladiator'; that only a great poet could have written the song that begins—

'She walks in beauty like the night;'

and the song that ends

'In silence and tears;'

the stanzas beginning

'The moon is up, and yet it is not night'

(not a bad line?) The stanzas on Waterloo and Rome, or, to take a slighter instance, I contend that only a great poet could have written this little song—

I

'So we'll go no more a-roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving
And the moon be still as bright.

II

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

III

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a-roving
By the light of the moon.'

"But to do justice to Byron one must take a deep draught of his foaming beverage, and to

refresh your memory just listen to these stanzas. Don't stop to pause and criticise line by line, but drink the whole thing in at a draught—

CLXXXIII

'It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded
Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,
Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded,
Circling all nature, hush'd, and dim, and still,
With the far mountain-crescent half surrounded
On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill
Upon the other, and the rosy sky
With one star sparkling through it like an eye.

CLXXXIV

And thus they wander'd forth, and hand in hand,
Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
Glided along the smooth and harden'd sand,
And in the worn and wild receptacles
Work'd by the storms, yet work'd as it were plann'd
In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,
They turned to rest; and, each clasp'd by an arm,
Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

CLXXXV

They look'd up to the sky, whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;

They heard the waves splash, and the wind so low,
And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other—and, beholding this,
Their lips drew near, and clung into a kiss.

CLXXXVI

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth, and love,
And beauty, all concentrating like rays
Into one focus, kindled from above:
Such kisses as belong to early days
Where heart, and soul, and sense, in concert move,
And the blood's lava, and the pulse a blaze,
Each kiss a heart-quake—for a kiss's strength,
I think, it must be reckoned by its length.

CLXXXVII

By length I mean duration; theirs endured
Heaven knows how long—no doubt they never reckon'd;
And if they had, they could not have secured
The sum of their sensations to a second:
They had not spoken; but they felt allured,
As if their souls and lips each other beckon'd,
Which, being joined, like swarming bees they clung—
Their hearts the flowers from whence the honey sprung.

CLXXXVIII

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlight bay,
The twilight glow, which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.

CLXXXIX

They fear'd no eyes nor ears on that lone beach,
  They felt no terrors from the night; they were
All in all to each other: though their speech
  Was broken words, they thought a language there;
And all the burning tongues the passions teach
  Found in one sigh the best interpreter
Of Nature's oracle—first love—that all
Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.

CXC

Haidée spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows
  Nor offered any; she had never heard
Of plight and promises to be a spouse
  Or perils by a loving maid incurr'd;
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
  And flew to her young mate like a young bird;
And never having dreamt of falsehood, she
Had not one word to say of constancy.'

"Isn't this poetry? Wouldn't any of the minor poets of to-day be surprised and pleased to have found that they had written these stanzas and those which follow until the passage ends thus—

CXCVI

'An infant when it gazes on the light,
  A child the moment when it drains the breast,
A devotee when soars the Host in sight,
  An Arab with a stranger for a guest,

A sailor when the prize has struck in fight,
A miser filling his most hoarded chest,
Feel rapture; but not such true joy are reaping
As they who watch o'er what they love while sleeping.

CXCVII

For there it lies, so tranquil, so beloved:
All that it hath of life with us is living;
So gentle, stirless, helpless and unmoved,
And all unconscious of the joy 'tis giving;
All it hath felt, inflicted, pass'd, and proved,
Hush'd into depths beyond the watcher's diving;
There lies the thing we love, with all its errors
And all its charms, like death, without its terrors.

CXCVIII

The lady watch'd her lover—and that hour
Of Love's, and Night's, and Ocean's solitude,
O'erflow'd her soul with their united power:
Amidst the barren sand and rocks so rude,
She and her wave-worn love had made their bower
Where nought upon their passion could intrude;
And all the stars that crowded the blue space
Saw nothing happier than her glowing face.'

"The man who wrote this had the tremendous driving force of passion, the sweeping vision, and the commanding utterance, the swiftness, and the splendour which belongs only to the gods and the Titans, and because Byron does not sit on the tranquil mountain in the

serene spaces with Virgil, Praxiteles, Racine, Leopardi, Milton, Mozart, and Raphael, he is none the less more than mortal. He may have been cast out of the heaven of pure art; but the story of his divine downfall has been written in the sky like a constellation and hangs there for ever; a permanent comet. One generation may forget him, being interested in other and later appearances in the firmament of poetry, but there will always be men to look and to wonder in any generation. Of such was your great scholar Arthur Strong, who knew Russian as well as I do from having learnt it out of a book, who was not only perhaps the man of the widest and deepest reading of our generation in Europe, but whose power of appreciation was as delicate as a microphone and as wide as the sea. He, alas! is now 'famous, calm, and dead'; and he admired Byron because he considered him to be an inspired poet and a writer of good verse. 'The French,' he once said to me, 'are like the Persians, they stand no nonsense about poetry. To them it is either good or bad verse.' Opinions differ, and opinions of the same man about the same thing differ under

the influence of time. For instance, Swinburne's blame of Byron has been recently quoted; but his praise of Byron in the first volume of *Essays and Studies* is, to my mind, the finest thing he ever wrote, and the last word of what can be said in praise of Byron. In that essay, in which he speaks of Byron having 'the imperishable excellence and sincerity and strength,' he was of the opinion that Byron wrote good verse. Personally I cannot think that the man who wrote the following lines :—

XXX

'There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing, had I such to give;
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,
And saw around me the wide field revive
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turn'd from all she brought to those she could not bring,'

or in another manner (of the meeting of the Archangel and Lucifer)—

'And yet between his Darkness and his Brightness,
There passed a mutual glance of great politeness,'

wrote bad verse.

"And to me he will always be what he was to Goethe, to Shelley, and to Arthur Strong—

'A beautiful and mighty thing of Light.'

"The phrase is Byron's."

MODERN LITERATURE IN RUSSIA

AT the beginning of last century there was in Russia, as in most other countries, a great wave of romanticism, which produced Pouskin, Lermontov, and other poets. The wave subsided, and no planets of great magnitude swam into the ken of the watchers of the skies of Russian literature until the period of the Crimean War. After the war and the liberation of the serfs there came another great movement, and a race of literary giants—Tolstoi, Tourgenieff, Dostoievski—was born. It is a remarkable fact that the movements of literary renascence in Russia have always immediately followed movements of political renascence and change. This second movement subsided, and although the Russo-Turkish War gave a kind of flip to the country a general calm soon once more prevailed, which

up till 1903 bore all the signs of stagnation. The writer who gives the most faithful picture of the general atmosphere of the period which preceded the Russo-Japanese War is Anton Tchekoff. In a multitude of short stories, some broadly humorous, others poignantly sad, and in half a dozen plays (in writing which he inaugurated a new epoch in the history of the stage and was the poineer of a movement which at one moment made itself felt in London at the Court Theatre) he reflects the frame of mind of educated Russia during this period. It is a frame of mind of stagnation. Its prevailing characteristic is the hopelessness arising from the conviction that it is no use trying to do anything in Russia; that on those who would like to work for progress and enlightenment, education and liberalism in the larger non-political sense of the word, the doors are shut, and that therefore there is nothing to do but to play cards, drink vodka, and while away the tedious hours as best one can. It is not that Tchekoff despaired in the least of the advent of the dawn, only he felt he would not live to see it, and that it would break upon another generation.

> They would march prospering not from his presence ;
> Songs shall inspirit them not from his lyre.

The dawn came quicker probably than he expected. Tchekoff's last play was performed in 1904, and he himself died soon after, while the war was still going on. Then came the bursting of the dam, and with the swift and tumultuous events of the political movement, with the granting of the freedom of the Press and the inflooding of Russia with a light which it had never before known, came a new literary renascence. It is too soon as yet to discern and to gauge what is the literary value of the thick and turbulent mass of production which has been poured out in Russia during the last two years. But one thing is certain, namely, that there is nothing stagnant in the new phenomena. The writers of the younger generation are still often pessimistic in the extreme ; they dip their pencils in the "hues of earthquake and eclipse," but it is the gloom of the earthquake and not the monotonous greyness of a sunless atmosphere. They shriek, they vociferate and they anathematise, but they do not say : "There is nothing to be done. Let us sit down and play Vindt." It

is true that this revolutionary outburst was succeeded by weariness and apathy. It is true that reaction was again in its turn as triumphant as it was in France during the reign of Louis XVIII., that the Liberal movement suffered a great blow owing to the fact that a considerable part of the population, namely, the landed proprietors and all people of means, who were until 1905 nearly all of them staunch supporters of the Opposition, frightened by the spectres of expropriation, revolution, and anarchy and ruin, veered to the Right. It is true that some people think that it will need another war, a famine, an epidemic of cholera, and several other disasters of the kind to set the movement going again. But in spite of this we shall never get back to the old stagnation, because of the flood of light which has been let into the country, and which cannot now ever be driven out again.

The literature, for instance, cannot go back to the time when there was no political life, because there is a political life now. The Reactionaries may have the best of it; the Liberals may discredit themselves and they may fail again and again; but all this consti-

tutes a thing called political life, and which is reflected directly in the daily Press and indirectly in the literature of the day. Therefore, so far, whatever may be the discouragement felt by political reformers, there is as yet no trace of a note of apathy in the literature of the day. The curious thing is that nearly all the literature which is now appearing—with the exception of a small æsthetic school which has plunged into mysticism, decadentism, and many other isms—has for its subject-matter political events and political events only. Prisons, police, Pogroms, meetings, elections, parties, assassinations, bombs, revolutionaries, reactionaries, anarchists, fanatics — these are the main elements of the new literature. Another interesting point is that with all this stock-in-trade of sensationalism the literature is not sensational. If one compares it with English or German books on the same subject one thinks one is reading about a different country. This is owing to the simple fact that the Russians understand the people about whom they are writing. They know that humanity is not divided into two clearly defined categories—Liberals who are all saints

and Conservatives who are all monsters. They know that because a man is a policeman he does not necessarily cease to be a human being, or that because a man is a revolutionary he does not necessarily become a superman, endowed with the resistance of Prometheus, the energy of Cromwell, the kindness of St. John. These writers distinguish. Andreev, for instance, writes a touching story of the Governor of a town, who in a moment of riot gives the order for firing on the crowd. He then relates how this man knows he will be killed, how every one else knows it, and how slowly, deliberately, and helplessly he slides into his doom. Kouprin, one of the most talented writers of the younger generation, tells a story which he says is a true one, of how after one of the Jewish "Pogroms," when a committee was sitting to organise relief for those who had suffered, a deputation of thieves arrives and addresses the President. The thieves are burning with indignation because they have been accused of having taken part in the "Pogrom." They are wounded in their most sensitive spot: their *amour propre.* They cannot get over the fact that people such

as they—thieves by profession, who take pride in their art, whether it consist in pocketpicking, or housebreaking—should be confused with the inglorious herd of hooligans; and what is to them the unkindest cut of all is that people should have thought them capable of siding with the police, since they say that the "Pogroms" are the work of the police, and that the police is but the instrument in the hands of what Prince Ourousov once called the "dark forces" which stand behind the Government, and who make it so difficult for people to govern Russia.

Again, the same author tells a story of a revolutionary student who betrays his companions because, when he is interviewed by the police inspector he loses his nerve. He is not otherwise a coward; but he is afraid of *people*. The police inspector, he says, was as civil as a dentist to his comrades, but him he hectored and bullied, feeling instinctively that he would give way, and he did. He shoots himself: he is not afraid of doing that. In a letter he writes before killing himself he explains that he is not in the least afraid of death or of danger; but that in the presence

of people he loses his head, and he attributes the fact to his having been soaked in the atmosphere of the stagnant generation of his parents, from whose influence he never escaped. These writers afford us an infinite number of sidelights on the subtleties, the contradictions, the curious contrasts which the political events bring to light—in fact on human nature, which is the same everywhere, but which under the stress and pressure of untoward violence is sharply revealed to us as though by lightning. Then, of course, the very existence of conflicting parties, ideals, opinions and aims gives the writer endless "copy" and an unbounded field of dramatic material.

The Dreyfus case divided France into two camps and split up families. Much more powerful, then, must be the political question in Russia, where it is not merely abstract but concrete; not merely platonic, but full of living passion, where any day a Conservative statesman may learn that his son or his daughter has blown up one of his colleagues, or a revolutionary girl may ascertain that her betrothed has denounced her comrades to the police. In this domain vistas are opened on to

endless "conflicts of wills," the most rewarding stuff for drama.

All this does not make for stagnation, and it is impossible to sum up the characteristics of modern Russian literature better than in the following words, which Kouprin puts into the mouth of the student (in a story to which I alluded above) who shot himself. He is talking of the schoolboy of the present generation, and what he says of the schoolboy applies equally well to the new generation, its literature, and all that belongs to it.

"I am convinced that the schoolboy of the sixth form to-day in the presence of all the Kings of Europe, in any throne room you please, would fiercely and clearly—and even somewhat rudely—declare the claims of *his party*. He is, it is true, almost absurd, this premature schoolboy; but there is in him a sacred respect for his own joyful, proud, and free ego, for that very thing which the spiritual poverty and the cowardly morals of our parents extirpated in us, who belong to the former generation."

THE RUSSIAN STAGE

HAMLET in one of those pointed phrases which appear to Count Tolstoy to be so foreign to his character, and to the rest of the world to be peculiarly in harmony with it, said that players were "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time." It is certain that at the present day in Russia the doings of the Russian stage and of the players throw many interesting sidelights on the present situation; in fact, Hamlet's remark is especially applicable to Russia at the present day. Whatever one may think of Russian politics at the present moment, whether we are witnessing the slow phases of a revolution, an evolution, or merely a crisis, one thing is certain and that is that the country is not in a normal condition, and that the element of paradox which has always existed in Russian life has now reached an exaggerated point of intensity.

The country is still an autocracy in which the Monarch is constantly declaring that his autocratic sovereignty is to remain inviolate, and at the same time that he is determined to fulfil his promise that the people shall govern themselves. The most important political party is still outlawed. You may be hanged for stealing three roubles (six shillings); for shooting a student in a restaurant you receive a year's imprisonment, and for arranging a bomb explosion which fails to kill the Prime Minister, but which does kill many other people, you are let off with penal servitude, and under no circumstances whatever can you be handcuffed. This is not a normal situation, and the people who are factors in such a situation cannot fail to be affected by it. Therefore it is interesting to study as manifested on the stage the "abstracts and brief chronicles" of this extraordinary epoch. Such a study is doubly interesting and valuable owing to the peculiar nature of the Russian stage at the present moment.

To explain why this is so I must state briefly what are the chief characteristics of the Russian stage. It differs entirely from the

European stage in that it escaped the influence of the modern French stage and the French ideals of stagecraft, of the "well-made" play, which produced the skill of Scribe, the ingenuity of Sardou, the logic of Alexandre Dumas *fils*, which left so deep an imprint on the stage of all other European countries. This tradition of stagecraft and these ideals were absorbed by Henrik Ibsen, who, as soon as he had made himself absolute master of all tricks which this craft comprised, threw them overboard and wrote plays in which he showed how at a given moment Fate may deal to mortals terrific blows arising from their deeds in the past, and often what they considered to be their good deeds—the aforesaid blows making themselves manifest in that by the ordinary course and conversations of everyday life. Ibsen was, therefore, the great reformer of the modern stage; and he not only cast away the tricks of the French school, but he wrote plays about human beings ruthlessly and vividly portrayed instead of conventional puppets. In France there was likewise a revolt against the "well-made" play, and dramatists of the naturalist school gave to the

public what they called "slices of life," which in its turn produced a reaction towards romanticism and artificial comedy. But in spite of the various phases of Scribisme and naturalism, and in spite of the fact that the Scribe-Sardou tradition has been thrown to the winds, certain ideals belonging to this school remain in the modern French stage, namely, the necessity of "situations," or of fundamental theses to be worked out logically, which cause many modern French plays to resemble mathematical problems. The Russian stage differs entirely from both the French and the Scandinavian. The Sardou-Scribe school never reigned in Russia, so that there was no necessity to dethrone it, but apart from this significant fact the Russian stage has just as little in common with Ibsen, the French naturalist school, and the modern French play *à thèse* as it has with Sardou or Dumas *fils*. This is where the difference lies. Ibsen shows us human beings at a moment when Fate in the shape of the inevitable result of their actions falls upon them like a thunderbolt; the French naturalist school gave us slices of raw life, but slices of brutally raw life so brutal as to be exaggerated,

abnormal, and therefore unreal; the modern French play *à thèse* goes back for its machinery to the old ideal of the well-made play; that is to say, the wine is new, but the skins are old.

The Russian stage simply aims at one thing —to depict everyday life; not exclusively the brutality of everyday life, nor the tremendous catastrophes befalling human beings; nor to devise intricate problems and far-fetched cases of conscience in which human beings might possibly be entangled. It simply aims at presenting glimpses of human beings as they really are, and by means of such glimpses it opens out avenues and vistas on to their lives. The Russian stage, therefore is like the Russian novel, realistic because it is a reflection of life, and it is unlike the French naturalist novel or naturalist play because these two things never reproduced life as it is, but portions only of life exaggerated and magnified by the fantastic vision of men of talent who were sometimes men of genius. The reflection of anybody who has some experience of the stage, on reading this will, I imagine, be the following: The everyday life of ordinary human beings can be reflected in a novel, but not on the

stage, which demands the observation of certain conventions and the presence of certain cardinal factors such as dramatic interest, the conflict of wills, etc., which are indispensable to the acted drama. Moreover, the public goes to the theatre to be amused, and the faithful photography of everyday life cannot be amusing; the public wishes to forget everyday life, and to find on the stage that which in everyday life is not predominant. Well, the Russian stage has proved that these two contentions are not necessarily true. Excellent plays can be written on the basis of strong situations, but the Russian playwrights have proved that excellent plays can be written in which the situations are neither more nor less dramatic than those which occur every day before our eyes among our immediate circle of acquaintance. They have also proved another thing—that the public finds this kind of play interesting in the extreme and flocks to see it; and this leads one to conclude that the secret of the matter lies possibly in the fact that these plays are *true* pictures of life, and not would-be pictures of life which are in reality false, and that the former cannot help being interesting,

and the latter cannot help being tedious. I believe that plays written about real life, in which the characters live and behave as they do in reality, would be not only interesting but successful in any country. However that may be, the fact remains that the modern Russian play consists of a series of pictures of everyday life faithfully depicted, without any research of special theses or situations more theatrical than those which everyday life abundantly affords, and that these plays are successful. They make money. A cosmopolitan traveller once said to me that he could no longer sit through a modern French play of the type of *Le Dédale* or plays such as M. Bernstein writes, because he found them so intolerably artificial, and this was because he had seen many Russian plays, of which the pre-eminent characteristics were reality and naturalness. This being so it is easy to understand that Russian plays form an exceedingly interesting commentary, an illuminating "abstract and brief chronicle" of the Russian life of to-day.

I will give a few instances taken from plays which were being performed during the winter

season.[1] It must be remembered that there is a censorship in Russia which is almost as severe where politics are concerned as our censor in England is severe when the public morality is liable to be shocked. In spite of this, politics, if not always mentioned outright, permeate the Russian stage just as much as they permeate Russian life, and in some cases they are allowed to be mentioned outright, for the Russian censorship acts in a way peculiarly its own, or rather it acts just as our censorship does when morals are concerned, in an utterly illogical and incomprehensible fashion. There is a play called *Walls* being performed at the State-subventioned theatre in St. Petersburg. This play would be forbidden in England, not because it inculcates immorality, but because certain facts are mentioned in it over which we draw a veil in this century, but which Shakespeare did not shrink from mentioning in the days of Queen Elizabeth. That is by the way. In this play we get among other things a glimpse of the life of an old schoolmaster, who has retired, and his wife ; they have a daughter aged fifteen. These nice old parents feel that

[1] 1907.

there is a gulf between them and their child. The daughter conceals her movements. She hides a portion of her life from her parents, and this distresses them. We see the interior of their home, and we see them waiting for the daughter in anxiety when she is returning late from one of the expeditions about which she refuses to speak. The father is distressed by the young generation. "In my time," he says, "we were Liberals, and we worked for the cause, but quietly; now every one howls in the street and there is no talent anywhere." He looks at Hertzen's portrait, which is hanging on the wall, and he says: "Where have they got a man like him?" At last the daughter arrives, a charming, simple, natural girl, pretty and attractive. They beg her to say where she has been, and to be admitted into her confidence. We, the public, know to a man that she has been to something political, socialistic or revolutionary; we know that the parents know, and that she knows that the parents know, and that the parents know that she knows that they know. In spite of this she refuses to give any details. The father tells her she is on a wrong tack. "It's all words,"

he says. "You don't understand, you can't understand," she answers. Then after a while she gives the following astounding explanation of her ideals: "There are two loves—a small love and a great love. The small love is what one feels for one's favourite chair, one's table, one's father, one's mother; the great love is the love which Christ felt for the whole world, for humanity, for man, for the people." The father revolts at the idea of being compared to a table, and she kisses and quiets him, but one feels that, as far as she is concerned, she spoke the truth. Therefore we are not surprised in the last act when she tells a man who loves her, and loves her in vain, that she is going for good; she has received orders and starts for the South by the twelve o'clock train. Here again the whole audience knows that she is going to obey the orders of the Revolutionary Committee, probably to kill some one. We see her leave the house. The parents are within drinking tea; we see them by the light of the lamp through the window; she has promised to be back soon; she is only going on a commission to the next street, she says; "she casts one longing, lingering look behind;" the

man who is in love with her tries to keep her back by force, but she tears herself away from him and disappears into the night, and we see the parents waiting and waiting, and opening the window and listening for her return, and the curtain falls.

This character of the daughter is a perfectly faithful picture of a type that exists by the score in Russia to-day, and this play, acted (it sounds like a paradox) at the State-paid Imperial Theatre throws a searchlight on to the inner life of the throwers of bombs and the killers of governors. It explains to us what sort of people these are and why they do these things, and the spectacle is most instructive.

There was another play being performed this season[1] called *Chaos*, in which the hero is the son of an aristocratic family who is a Social Revolutionary. This play is far more stagy and less original than Russian plays are generally, but it also contains many interesting sidelights on the situation. We see the young wife of a high official gradually opening her eyes to the political situation and gradually becoming bitten with Liberal ideas, and finally

[1] January 1907.

plunging into the whole thing. We see the young Socialist's agony when the family receive the news that their home in the country has been burnt and they tell him that he must go at once, and he cannot go because he is "wanted" by his party in St. Petersburg. We are shown the comic aspects also—the family in which every member takes in a newspaper of a different shade of political opinion and is quarrelling over the fact; and a meeting of students in the aristocratic home quarrelling over Karl Marx and throwing their cigarettes on the floor. We are shown, impartially, the good points and the ridiculous points of both parties. Altogether it is a most amusing play "palpitating with actuality."

I have seen Tchekoff's last play, *The Cherry Garden*, either seven or eight times. It tells in four pictures the whole story of the aristocratic landed proprietor class in Russia. We see a charming old and rather foolish aristocratic landlord coming back to his country house with his sister, a young and beautiful married woman, after five years' absence. Their affairs are in a shocking state, and a neighbour of theirs, whose father was a serf,

and who himself was a peasant, but who has become a merchant and a millionaire, warns them that unless they let their property and allow it to be cut up into villas it will be sold by auction. They tell him he does not understand what he is talking about. The idea is simply inconceivable to them. They say that something will turn up and save them; but it does not, and the place and the beautiful cherry garden are sold by auction, and bought by the merchant whose father was their serf, and who ran about barefoot in their village as a child; and they go away, and the shutters are shut, and we hear the cherry garden being hewed down. That is the whole subject of the play; but I know no play more poignant and more intensely real. It has, I should add, the advantage of being played by the company of the "Artistic Theatre" of Moscow. The acting of this company seems to me as superior to any other acting I have ever seen as Shakespeare's plays are superior to any other plays in verse. It is simply in another class. They are now performing Ibsen's great poetical play *Brand* so magnificently that it would be worth while for any stage lover to go to Moscow from London

merely to see this performance. To see one of the greatest of poetical plays played with inspiration by the chief actors, not only magnificently but artistically staged and mounted, and perfectly interpreted down to the smallest part and the most trivial detail is very rare. It is worth a pilgrimage just in the same way as it is worth while going to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal.* And for the perfection of ensemble in the interpretation and the inspiration of the principal units, it surpasses anything which I have seen at Bayreuth, or anywhere else.

A RUSSIAN MYSTERY PLAY[1]

I WAS once in a company of Russian people, when a lady suddenly asked to be explained what algebra meant. There were several mathematicians present, but they, perhaps because they were mathematicians, were unable to give a satisfactory explanation. I then said to the lady that algebra is to arithmetic what Andreev's play *The Life of Man* is to other plays. She immediately understood the nature of algebra. Andreev's play, *The Life of Man*, which was produced for the first time last year in St. Petersburg, and which is now being given at the Artistic Theatre of Moscow, is written in the algebra of art. Shakespeare wrote plays in which Fate manifested its inexorable designs through the passions of individual men; for instance, he showed us the fate of a man who was

[1] *The Life of Man*, by Andreev.

warm-hearted, brave, simple and jealous—Othello; of a man who was dreamy, ambitious, superstitious and hysterical—Macbeth. Molière, on the other hand, synthesised into a series of vital types the various aspects of humanity, and showed us the misanthropy of the whole human race in *Le Misanthrope*, and the hypocrisy of all hypocrites in *Tartuffe*. Andreev in his play represents neither types nor individuals, but simply the algebraic symbol of man. Not man the miser, or man the infinitely complex Hamlet, but man the quantity, man *X*, in face of fate the quantity *Y*.

His play is not a play but a morality, such as those which were played in the Middle Ages, without the buffoonery. It is a solemn mystery and it is treated as such. The audience do not applaud and the actors do not come before the curtain. The persons of the plays are puppets, the pictures shown are like a series of rough woodcuts such as those in a child's newspaper; a penny plain and twopence coloured.

I have seen the play mounted and played with all the skill and subtlety which are at the command of M. Stanislavski's company at

the Artistic Theatre of Moscow. The acting was superlative, and the mounting curious and original; nevertheless I will describe the play as I saw it when it was given for the first time at the small theatre of Madame Komisarjevskaia at St. Petersburg; because there (although the acting was less excellent), owing to the simplicity of the staging, the poignancy and the *macabre* effect of the play were to my mind even more forcibly brought home, and the effect, if not more impressive, was in closer harmony with the author's written words.

The curtain goes up on a space of complete darkness (in Moscow they gave you the impression that you were looking into illimitable space), from which a figure in grey emerges (in Moscow there was a vast shadow behind him, shaped like that of Memnon's statue)—a grey figure with shrouded head and only his mouth visible. This figure is called in Russian "He." "He" is Fate, Life, Destiny, what you will—the *Y* quantity which is inseparable from the *X* quantity Man. The same thing as Alfred de Musset pictures in his *Nuit de Décembre*, the presence which was

always with him "qui me resemblait comme un frère."

The grey figure speaks a prologue, the beginning of which is as follows: "Behold and listen, you who have come hither for mirth and laughter. Here you shall see pass before you the whole life of Man, with its dark beginning and its dark end. Unborn hitherto and mysteriously hid in the womb of time, without thought, without feeling, without knowledge of aught, he mysteriously breaks through the barriers of nothingness and with a cry heralds the beginning of his brief life. In the night of oblivion a candle breaks into flame lit by an unseen hand.—It is the life of Man. Look upon its flame—it is the life of Man. As soon as he is born he receives the shape and the name of Man, and becomes like unto all men who dwell upon the earth. And their merciless fate becomes his fate, and his merciless fate is the fate of all men. Irresistibly compelled by Time, he passes through the unchanging stages of human life, from the depths to the heights, from the heights to the depths. With darkened sight, he shall never perceive the next step over

which his uncertain foot is already raised; with obscured knowledge he shall never know what the coming day, what the coming hour, what the coming minute are to bring. And in his blind ignorance, outworn by foreboding and convulsed by hope and fear, submissive he fulfils the iron circle of his destiny."

The prologue, of which I have only quoted a small part, is written in majestic prose, and it recalls the chorus in Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon"—

> "He weaves and is clothed with derision,
> Sows and he shall not reap.
> His life is a watch or a vision
> Between a sleep and a sleep."

The grey figure relates the varying stages, the changing vicissitudes of which the life of Man is composed. He tells of the death of Man, his return to nothingness, and he relates how he himself, the mysterious figure, shall ever be with Man, unseen and near, in his hours of joy and of sorrow; when he watches and when he sleeps, when he prays and curses, in his hours of gladness, when his free and brave spirit leaps high, in his hours of down-

heartedness and anguish, when the spirit is darkened with a mortal weariness and the blood freezes in the heart; in his hours of triumph and defeat, in his hours of mighty wrestling with the inevitable, he will be with him. The prologue ends thus: "And you who have come hither for mirth, you who are allotted to death, look on and listen; here with its far-off and illusive echo shall pass before you, with its sorrows and with its joys, the short-spanned life of Man."

The first scene is called the birth of the Man. The curtain rises on a dark room. A group of old crones—you cannot see them distinctly—like grey mice, are chattering in the obscurity. They are talking of the child that is to be born. Here are the first words of their conversation—

"I should like to know what will come to our friend: a son or a daughter?"

"Is it not all the same to us?"

"I like little boys."

"And I like little girls. They always sit at home and wait, when you go to them."

"And you like visiting?"

[*The old women laugh low.*

"He knows."

"He knows." (*A pause.*)

"Our friend would like to have a little girl. She says that boys are too boisterous and enterprising, they run after danger when they are little, and climb up high trees and bathe in deep water. They often fall into the water and get drowned. And when they grow up they go to war and kill one another."

"She thinks little girls don't get drowned. But I have seen many drowned maidens, and they were like all drowned people—wet and green."

"She thinks that little girls don't kill with stones!"

"Poor thing, it is going so hardly with her, it is the sixteenth hour that we have been here, and she has screamed the whole time. At first she screamed loudly, so that her cry made our ears sore, and then more gently, and now she only moans."

"The doctor says she will die."

"No, the doctor says that the child will be born dead, and that she will live."

"Why are they born? it is so painful."

"And why do they die? that is still more painful!"

[*The old women laugh low.*

"Yes, they are born and they die."

"And again they are born."

[*They laugh. The low cry of the suffering woman is heard.*

"It has begun once more."

"She has found her voice again, that is good."

"That is good."

"Poor husband: he was in such a state that he was funny to look upon. At first he was glad and said that he wished for a boy, he thought that his son would be a minister or general, now he wishes for nothing, neither for a boy or a girl, he only cries."

"When the pangs began he himself writhed."

"They sent him to the chemist's to fetch medicine. He drove for two hours by the chemist's and could not remember what he wanted. Then he returned."

The old crones continue to chatter and to laugh their low, ghastly laugh, until, suddenly, all becomes still, and the grey figure enters

and says, "Be still. The Man is born." And as he says this a candle which he bears in his hand breaks into flame. The old women disappear, and the father of the Man comes in with the doctor. He says that he hates the child for the pain it has caused his wife, but when he hears that it is like him his heart overflows with gladness, and he thanks Heaven that his desire has been fulfilled, and he prays God that his son may grow up strong and healthy, intelligent and honest. Then come the relations; they are got up like puppets, like penny, wooden, painted dolls. They congratulate the father on the birth of his child, each with a set phrase, they say all the usual things. They leave no stereotype commonplace unsaid. Here is an example of their conversation—

The Fat Lady speaks: "Allow me, dear brother, to congratulate you on the birth of your son."

Fat Gentleman: "Allow me, dear relation, to most heartily congratulate you on the birth of your son, an event which you have been expecting for such a long time."

The others: "Allow us, dear relation, to

congratulate you on the birth of your son."

The Father: "I thank you, I thank you; you are all very good and kind people," etc.

A young Girl: "What will you call the child, dear uncle? I should like him to have a pretty, poetical name; so much depends on the name of a man."

The Fat Lady: "I should like him to have a simple and sensible name. People with pretty names are always unsatisfactory and rarely succeed in life."

The Fat Gentleman: "It seems to me, my dear brother-in-law, that the child should be called after some of its older relations; that prolongs and maintains the race."

The Father: "Yes, my wife and I often thought about it but could not come to a decision. The birth of a child gives rise to so many new cares and anxieties."

Fat Lady: "It fills up life."

Fat Gentleman: "It gives a splendid purpose to life. To educate a child, to cause him by our guidance to avoid those faults into which we ourselves fell, to strengthen his mind with the riches of our own experience;—by so doing

we create a better man, and slowly but surely move towards the goal of our existence—perfection."

The Father: "I entirely agree with you, my dear son-in-law!"

Here the doctor enters and says, "Sir, your wife is feeling very ill; she wishes to see you." The Man goes out.

The relations, after discussing whether the mother will live or not, end by talking—always in set phrases—of ordinary topics, the men of whether smoking is harmful, the women of how to remove grease stains from silk; and then the infant is heard crying and the curtain falls. The second scene is called "Love and Poverty." The Man is grown up. It is his room. He is married. His room is quite bare, the walls are damp but lit up with bright, warm light. The grey figure is there; a third of the candle that he holds in his hands has burnt down. The neighbours come into the room. They are bright, cheerful puppets, and they bring flowers and leaves and ribbons. They talk of the Man and his wife. They are so poor, the neighbours say, and so happy, they sing and dance for joy. They are so

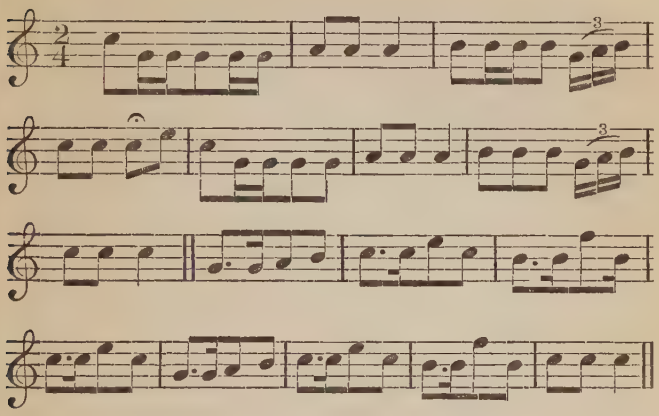
good and kind. They leave flowers for the Man and his wife, and a bottle of milk, a piece of bread and a very cheap, strong cigar.

They go, and they are followed by the wife of the Man. She is young and pretty. She tells of her poverty; of how her husband is a talented architect and cannot find work. She prays Heaven to send her bread so that her dear, good husband may not hunger; she prays that if her husband be cross to her, that it may be forgotten. She goes out and the figure in grey speaks and says, "She little knows that her desire is already fulfilled; that two rich men are already seeking the Man to give him work which shall bring him riches and fame. Thus does fortune come to Man, and thus does it go." Then the Man and his wife return. The Man complains of his hunger and fatigue. He is cross and irritable. The wife's eyes fill with tears, and then immediately he curses himself for his selfishness and his thoughtlessness and kisses away her tears. Hope rises triumphant in him, and turning to the grey figure, whom, of course, he does not see, he challenges Life and Fate: "Come

out to battle," he cries, "I *shall* conquer," and the wife of the Man applauds him. Then the Man and his wife play at make believe. They build castles in the air. They weave the future out of rainbows. They imagine palaces where they will live in Italy or in the North. They find the milk and bread and flowers brought by the neighbours. They eat it greedily together, and the Man lights the cigar, which tastes like heaven. They dance for joy. They imagine they are in a great palace giving a ball—that the wife of the Man is the queen of the ball. She puts the ribbons and flowers in her hair, and they dance wildly together, while the figure in grey looks on indifferent, and the candle in his hands burns brightly.

The next scene is called "The Ball in the Man's House." It is a huge room with great columns placed in a circle. Beyond the columns all is shadow, and the room is brilliant with cold, artificial light. Everything in the house is rich and gilded. An orchestra is playing; three little black puppets, one scraping the violin, one the 'cello, and the third blowing the flute. They only play

one tune, a lively, monotonous and foolish polka.



Under each column a guest is seated, stiff and lifeless as a waxwork. They are old, wrinkled, painted, bedaubed and ridiculous. The women guests are dressed in silk, satins, tinsel, and gaudy jewels; the men are like expensive, pompous dolls, some in uniform, some covered with orders, others in black and white clothes; they are all quite expressionless.

In the centre of the room young men and girls are dancing the polka, and they dance and disappear in and out of the columns. The

figure in grey stands in one corner of the room and two-thirds of his candle have been consumed. The guests talk. Here is the beginning of their conversation—

"I must observe that it is a great honour to be invited to the Man's ball."

"You may add that this honour is given to extremely few. The whole town tried to get asked; very few were chosen. My husband, my children and myself are all proud of the honour the most highly-to-be-honoured Man has paid us."

"I am sorry for those who were not asked, they will not be able to sleep all night for envy; and to-morrow they will invent calumnies about the tediousness of the Man's ball."

"They never saw such magnificence."

"You might add such extraordinary magnificence and luxury."

"And I say such enchanting and unceasing amusement. If this is not amusing I should like to know what is amusing!"

"Stop; it is useless arguing with people who are tormented by envy. They will say to you, that the chairs on which we are sitting were not of gold at all."

"That they were the simplest wooden chairs bought at a second-hand shop!"

"That there was no electric light here, but ordinary tallow candles. They will have the face to deny that the pictures had such broad, gold frames. I seem to hear the sound of gold."

"You see its gleam; that is enough, I think."

"I seldom enjoyed music so much as at the balls of the Man. It is divine music and it lifts the soul into the higher spheres."

"I should hope that the music was good considering what is paid for it; you should add that this is the best orchestra in the town; it plays on the greatest occasions."

"You hear this music long afterwards; it takes the soul captive. My children, when they return from the balls of the Man, keep on humming the music a long time afterwards."

And they continue to talk in detail of the splendour of the house of the Man, of his riches, of his many rooms, his numerous houses, his wonderfully appointed bathrooms, and they all say in chorus—

"How rich!"

"How splendid!"

"How gorgeous!"

"How rich!"

The Man and his wife pass through the ballroom. The Man has grown grey, but still seems strong and full of life; the wife is still pretty. The Man is followed by his friends and his enemies. His friends have good countenances and his enemies look horrible and evil. And as they pass the guests vie with each other in praises of the Man and his wife, with applause for the friends and hisses for the enemies. When they have passed through to supper, the guests begin to grow anxious lest they have been forgotten, and when at last they begin to grow convinced of this, one of them says, "I cannot understand, I must frankly own, why we came to a house with such a reputation. One should choose one's acquaintances more carefully." At that moment a man in a gorgeous livery enters and announces that the Man and his wife beg their honoured guests to come to supper.

The guests all file off, saying in chorus,

"What a livery! What music! How gorgeous! How rich! What an honour! What an honour!"

The next scene is the misfortune of the Man. He has lost his money, he has sold all his possessions, even his books. His one servant, an old woman, tells this, and how there is nothing left in the large house but rats; and how a fresh misfortune had just happened. The Man's child went for a walk, and some wicked person threw a stone at him and broke open his head, and now he is lying sick and in danger of life. The doctor comes and tells the anxious Man and his wife, who are now old and worn (for the candle the grey figure still holds in his hands is almost burnt down to its socket), that their son is asleep and will probably get better. The Man looks at his drawing-table. "Look," he says to his wife, "I began to draw this when our boy was still well; I stopped at this line and thought 'I will rest and go on later.' Look what a simple and quiet line! And yet it is terrible to look upon, for it may be the last line which I drew when my boy was still alive." Then he finds his son's toys on

the table; their presence there used to make his work easier. They were bought in the days of the Man's poverty; a little wooden horse without a tail, and a squeaking clown. The Man remembers how he used to talk to his little boy playing with the gee-gee. "Where are you galloping to, gee-gee?" "Over the hills and far away, papa, to kill the dragon because I'm a knight." Then the Man and his wife kneel and pray that their son may not die. Anything else, but not that. The mother says, "Let my son live." And the Man's prayer is as follows:—

"See, I pray to Thee, I bend my aged knees; I grovel in the dust before Thee, I kiss Thy earth. Perhaps I have offended Thee: if so, then forgive. It is true I was hard, envious, exacting: I often blamed myself; wilt Thou forgive me? If such is Thy will, punish me, only leave me my son; leave him, I pray Thee. I do not ask for mercy nor for pity, but only for justice. Wicked men tried to kill him—those who offend Thee with their works and make Thy earth hideous. Wicked, pitiless ruffians! who throw stones from behind corners, from behind

a corner, the ruffians! Do not let them accomplish their evil work. Staunch the blood; give back life to my son who is so good. Thou didst take everything from me, but did I ever pray as a suppliant: 'Give me back my riches, give me back my friends, give me back my talent'? No, never; even for my talent I never prayed. And Thou knowest what talent is—it is greater than life. 'Perhaps it must be so,' methought, and I bore everything—I bore everything. But now I pray on my knees, in the dust, kissing the earth, let my son live! give my son back his life. I kiss Thy earth."

And then the wife goes to see after the child, and the Man falls to sleep on the sofa and dreams happy dreams of his boy.

And the grey figure speaks and says even now, while the Man is dreaming happily, his son has died. The Man awakes and his wife returns, and he asks if his son is dead, and she answers "Yes." The wife falls at the Man's feet and cries bitterly, and the Man turns to the grey figure and curses his life and the day when he was born.

The fifth and last scene is the death of the

Man. It is in an underground cellar where drunkards are laughing and raving. The Man sits apart and alone with his head buried in his hands. His wife is dead, his house is empty; there is nowhere for him to go, he is utterly alone and he is dying, for the candle in the hands of the grey figure has almost burnt out. The old crones who appeared in the first scene of all return once more; they talk and they repeat the set phrases of the guests at the Man's ball: "How rich! How gorgeous!" They dance round the Man to the tune of the foolish polka which was played at his ball. "Do you remember?" they whisper. "You are going to die. Do you remember? 'How rich! How gorgeous!'"

The dance of the crones grows wilder and swifter, and at last the Man raises himself and cries, "Where is my sword and my shield? I am disarmed—help! Be cur . . ." and he falls on a chair and dies. The candle in the hands of the grey figure goes out. The grey figure says, "Be still! The Man is dead." The crones sing and dance round the dead Man to the sound of the foolish polka, but at last all grows dark and there is silence.

This play might have been written eight hundred years ago. And whatever happens to the world, as long as men exist, it will be understood. It could be played in Chinese without losing one jot of its import or its message; it is outside of time and place, independent of man's fleeting customs and various manners, for it merely repeats the cry of pain uttered in sublime accents by the Hebrew poet, and re-echoed by all suffering singers in all times and countries, from Aeschylus to Leopardi. But it only shows one side of the mysterious medal; there is another, a shining side which other poets have seen and sung: Dante, Goethe, and Shelley, for instance, in his "high and passionate" "Adonais," when he says—

> "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity."

A DREAM IN THE DUMA

IN the following paper I have attempted to transplant the facts and atmosphere of recent Russian history into English surroundings: to imagine the Russian Revolution happening in England.

Two or three days ago, while I was listening to a Ministerial explanation in the Duma, I fell asleep and dreamt a strange dream which I will now relate.

I dreamt I was in a third-class carriage in England on the South-Western line; the train was evidently going to London, and we were somewhere between Cobham and Surbiton. In the carriage there was a mixed collection of persons. A clerk going up to the City, two workmen, a gay man in flannels with a straw hat, an elderly man with grey hair and spectacles, a young lady wearing a cotton

blouse and a straw hat, carrying a hamper with flowers sticking out of it, a middle-aged man who looked like a commercial traveller, and a young mechanic.

"The *Morning Post* out again to-day," said the mechanic to the workman.

"Oh! ah!" said the workman.

"Under its own name?" asked the elderly gentleman.

"Yes," said the mechanic, "they fixed it up with Scotland Yard."

"Why was it stopped?" asked the young man in flannels.

"In the personal column there was a paragraph," said the mechanic, "saying as Lord Kitchener was living like at Buckingham Palace —which he was—and at Scotland Yard they said as this was an instigation like to kill him."

"I suppose they're sure to kill him some time," said the young man in flannels.

"Yes," said the commercial traveller, "they'll probably shoot him in the back; cowards and swine I call 'em. If only we had a strong Government they'd all be 'ung."

"I suppose you think that is less cowardly than shooting down the workmen in Man-

chester," said the young lady in great indignation.

"'Ere, 'ere," said the workman.

"Got what they jolly well deserved," said the commercial traveller. "In what other country would they stand workmen making barricades in the street and trying to kidnap the Governor, I should like to know."

"It was Admiral Fisher's fault," said the young lady; "directly he was made Governor of Manchester he made such a tactless speech; on purpose, of course, to incite the people to rise."

"He simply said he wasn't going to have any nonsense, and he meant to keep order in the town," said the commercial traveller.

"Provocation! Provocation!" said the workman and the young lady in chorus.

"The people in Manchester ought to have waited for Parliament to be summoned," said the old gentleman, who was reading the *Standard*.

"Wait, wait, wait; that's all everybody has to tell us," said the young man. "We got very little from the first Parliament, and now they're going to dissolve this one, I suppose."

"Who?" I asked.

"Why, the Government, of course," said the young man.

"Excuse me," I said. "I am a stranger and I don't quite understand. I don't know what's been happening in this country."

"Well," said the old man, "I suppose you know that two years ago after the disastrous war in South Africa, and the disorders and the general strike which followed it, the Government, acting under the advice of Sir Ernest Cassel, the Prime Minister, decided to re-establish the old liberties granted by the Magna Charta and to summon a Parliament —a thing which had not occurred since the days of Oliver Cromwell. A manifesto was issued in this sense, promising that henceforth no new laws should be passed without the consent of the people, and that a Parliament would shortly be summoned. This was taken by the whole population to mean that the autocratic powers of the Monarch were to be limited, and that the Government would henceforward be constitutional. In the meantime no laws were promulgated, but the newspapers for the first time for three hundred

years began to write what they pleased; all the Jews in the East End were massacred by hooligans at the instigation of the Jacobites; many of the University dons were sent to the Hebrides, and some of them to the Isle of Man and New Zealand; the administration of the country continued to be in the hands of the military governors instituted by Cromwell and confirmed by Charles II., and everything went jogging on until January, and since there was to be a Parliament general elections had to be held. The task of making an electoral law was entrusted to an official belonging to the Board of Trade, who devised a law according to which the labouring class should elect a member of their class for each borough, and besides this should have a vote in the election of the remaining representatives of the borough. This was done because the Government believed that the labouring classes were fundamentally loyal and would prove Conservative. The result of the elections was a triumphant majority for the Liberals, who were represented by the flower of the English gentry, among them being Lord Lansdowne, Lord Wemyss, and also by the most eminent

names of the Bar, science and literature, such as Asquith, Haldane, Morley, Butcher, and Sir Charles Dilke. Whereas among the gentry only six Jacobites were returned.

"The Liberals, who were nicknamed the C.B.'s, owing to one of their leaders' names being Campbell-Bannerman, were practically led by Mr. Balfour, who was not allowed to stand for Parliament by the Government for having edited the *Fortnightly Review* during some months previous to the elections. The labouring class returned fifteen Jacobite peasants and one hundred men who professed to belong to no party, but who as soon as Parliament was opened formed themselves into a Radical group called the Labour Party; there were also about fifty Irishmen and Scotchmen, who formed separate groups. The Parliament as soon as it met demanded a responsible Minister, and, the Government refusing, passed a vote of censure on the Ministers; Cassel had resigned before Parliament met and been succeeded by Sir Thomas (afterwards) Lord Sanderson, and Lord Methuen was appointed Minister of the Interior. The Government being unwilling

to yield on the subject of responsible Ministry, dissolved Parliament, and declared that a general election should be held in five months' time. But the C.B.'s regarded the sudden dissolution as unconstitutional, and published an address in which they advocated passive resistance. For this they were disenfranchised. Sir Thomas Sanderson resigned and was made a Peer, and Lord Methuen was made Prime Minister. As disorders were feared, London and all the large towns were placed under martial law. All the newspapers except the *Times* were suppressed, but the *Morning Post*, *Standard*, and *Daily News* were ultimately allowed to appear on certain conditions; and the provincial Governors were given powers to hang people within forty-eight hours without trial. On the other hand the revolutionary element enormously increased. Oxford and Cambridge were closed, and the undergraduates devoted their leisure to blowing up officials and soldiers with dynamite. From two to three hundred high officials perished in this manner, besides nearly all the rank and file of the police in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Edinburgh. Before the next elections were

held the Government took measures by which it hoped to obtain a moderate Conservative result, and a majority composed of men who considered Mr. Balfour's policy too advanced. They disenfranchised therefore the most educated portion of the lower class and ostracised the Liberals; the election was therefore held under double pressure, under that of the Government on the one hand and that of the revolutionaries on the other. The Socialist Party was allowed greater liberty than the Liberal Party, although the system of excluding any individual who was superior in any sort of way to his fellow-beings was rigorously adopted as regards the Socialists as well as regards the Liberals. At the time of the dissolution of the first Parliament many people, and among some who had great influence at Court, maintained that it would be a good thing to form a Ministry either of the C.B.'s or of leading men of the country gentry, such as the Duke of Devonshire. This latter possibility was taken into consideration and *pourparlers* took place between the Prime Minister and the Duke; but the Duke refused to take office unless guarantees

for the adoption of a thoroughly Liberal régime were given. As regards the C.B.'s the Government said they were a set of doctrinaires, that Mr. Balfour was a Jesuit, and that it was impossible to expect that a man who had written a defence of philosophic doubt and spent many hours on the golf links could possibly be capable of administrative work. The same argument was applied to Mr. Haldane and Mr. Morley; these men, it was said, were philosophers and men of letters, and could not be called statesmen. They were without experience.

"Mr. Winston Churchill, also a C.B., was said to be a Socialist at heart, and Mr. Belloc, a member of the Labour Party, had to leave the country to avoid arrest and emigrated to Russia, where he gave lectures on English literature.

"The result of the second General Election proved to be a great disappointment to the Government. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Morley stood as candidates for London, but a week before their election Mr. Balfour was disqualified on the grounds that he had only spent nine months of the preceding year in London and Mr. Morley was also disqualified,

because there had appeared in the *Spectator*, a newspaper to which he had been a leading contributor, a letter from an officer of the 60th Rifles, stating that the policy of the Government was revolutionising the Army. He was, however, shortly afterwards made a Peer and took his seat in the House of Lords. In spite of the persecution of the Liberals all the big towns returned Liberal members; Professor Butcher was returned for Cambridge, and Mr. Strachan Davidson for Oxford, and in all 90 Liberals were returned, 100 Socialists, 100 members belonging to the Labour Party, 60 Irishmen, 30 Jacobites, and 30 Conservatives. The Government brought forward a programme of elaborate reforms, which, however, eschewed Ministerial responsibility, and it was soon clear that the Liberals were dancing on a tight-rope over an abyss, and had to depend for support either on the Conservatives or on the Socialists. Shorn of all that constituted their strongest elements, their position was pitiable, and they had among them no statesman strong enough to build bricks out of straw, to dominate the situation and force his will on the Assembly. That was the position the day after Parliament

was opened. During two months, however, the Centre managed to obtain a working majority, but last week they were defeated by the alliance of the Jacobites and the Socialists. And we are told that we may expect a dissolution any minute, although it is, perhaps, to the influence of the Government for Parliament to continue its existence, since it is too weak to prove a serious danger. That is the situation at present."

"Lord Lansdowne's country house, Bowood, was burnt yesterday," said the young man in flannels, looking up from his newspaper.

"Yes," said the commercial traveller, "and houses are being burned and looted in the Midlands every day; that comes of having a weak Government."

"Three policemen were shot at Leeds by a youth seventeen years old," continued the young man, "and the foreman of the ironworks at Wolverhampton was stabbed."

"How cruel of the Government," said the young lady, "to force people to do such things!"

"Lord Althorp has been asked to leave the Turf Club by the Jacobites," said the young man.

"Why?" said the young lady.

"Because of his principles," said the young man.

"Why," said the young lady, "he's a C.B., that is to say, almost a Jacobite."

"The C.B.'s are a Liberal Party based on sound democratic and constitutional principles," said the old man, much ruffled.

"Hear, hear," said the clerk.

"The C.B.'s are a set of revolutionary liars paid by the Jews and the Germans," said the commercial traveller.

"The C.B.'s ain't no good," said the workman. "They're in a funk of the Government."

"They've become Conservative," said the mechanic.

"Yes, Jacobite," said the young lady.

At that moment the train stopped. From one of the first-class carriages a gentleman in uniform got down.

"Lord Kitchener," said the young man, looking out of the window.

The young lady got out, carrying her hamper with her. As she walked past the General she took something from it and flung it at him. There was a terrific explosion, and I woke up .

A ZEMSTVO REPORT

THE Zemstvo report of a large district in the centre of Russia for the year 1907, the district of Morshansk, government of Tambov, is in the highest degree illuminating as to the difficulties and the problems with which Russian administrators and reformers are beset at the present moment. Before proceeding to an analysis of the report it will perhaps be as well to remind the reader of what the Zemstvo consists. The Zemstvo is a County Council consisting of about thirty-two members, of which twelve represent the nobility (practically the large landowner class), twelve the peasants, and six the city or cities of the district, one the clergy, and one the official class. To represent the nobility a candidate must possess a certain quantity of land (in the district I am speaking of, about 500 acres). Each member is elected by his class. This County Council

has in its hands the management of nearly all the primary schools, the public health department, the support and management of the roads and means of communication, and various small but important matters connected with farming and agriculture, besides the organisation of the county post. To pay for all this the Zemstvo has the right to levy taxes on the land. The Council elects a Standing Board of four members including the chairman, which carries on the business from one yearly meeting of the Council to the next, and is elected for three years. The Council also sends representatives to another Zemstvo Council representing the whole province, which is managed on similar lines.

The Board in the report in question starts by saying that the most salient fact in the present state of the Zemstvo in the district of Morshansk for the past year is a want of funds, owing to the fact that the taxes due both from peasants and landowners by which the Zemstvo is supported are no longer forthcoming. The taxes are not forthcoming because neither the peasants nor the landowners are willing to pay them, this unwillingness being in some cases

a matter of principle and in others the result of the peculiar psychology of the Russian landed class at the present time. The peasantry is neither sufficiently developed nor does it possess the requisite knowledge to form conceptions of principle with regard to the payment or the non-payment of taxes consciously. Conceptions of this kind, however, obviously exist, and they have reached the mass of the peasantry in the form of ready-made watchwords or party cries. These watchwords have the characteristic of releasing the peasantry from some kind of moral tie or obligation; it is not therefore surprising that being sown broadcast among the masses at a time of popular excitement they are eagerly absorbed. In the Daily Press stress was laid on the significance of not paying the Zemstvo taxes. The idea was spread among the peasants that the Zemstvo of the present day is an aristocratic institution, which draws on the resources of the peasant without giving him anything in return. Such was the elementary philosophy which was absorbed by the peasants. And now, although the cry against paying the Zemstvo taxes is no longer heard, doubt and

confusion have been instilled into the peasant as to what is truth, and in what the Zemstvo taxes in reality consist, as to whether they are simply a "squeeze" or a matter of public necessity and local interest. Such a question can only be settled by an inspection of figures and facts, but before going into these it is necessary to say a few words with regard to the non-payment of taxes by the landowners. The landowners were not so much actuated in this case by a principle as by a feeling of alarm resulting from the horrors of the Agrarian agitation. At one moment it seemed as if the end of private property had come, and that the only course left was to liquidate one's affairs and to flee from one's burning house, and if such was the case the landowner said to himself, "What is the use of paying taxes when my house is on fire, and I am lucky if I get off with my life?" In the places where, as in this district, there were no such violent incidents, a cooler argument obtained, namely, "If the peasants were not paying, why should we pay?" Some landowners, an infinite minority it is true, went so far in the organs of a reactionary character as to invert and apply the simple

party-cry of the peasants, speaking thus: "The Zemstvo is simply a peasants' institution drawing on the resources of the large landowners, and is incompatible with State interests; let it therefore be abolished." Thus the Zemstvo in its effort to satisfy the universally recognised needs of the population found itself between Scylla and Charybdis. Let us now return to the question, which is more important, of the boycotting of the Zemstvo by the peasants. If the Zemstvo is an aristocratic institution which would therefore deserve to be boycotted by the people, it should above all and before all consider its own class interests and satisfy them at the cost of the Zemstvo funds, otherwise the accusation is meaningless. A glance at the balance-sheet subjoined will satisfy the reader as to whether this is the case or not.

Total estimated expenses for 1907–8: 243,504 roubles 60 kopecks (£24,350, 5s.) divided as follows:—

1. Public health, 61,429 roubles 54 kop. (£6142, 9s.), or more than 25 per cent. of the total estimate.

2. Education, 52,682 roubles (£5268), or quarter of the total.

3. Share in the expenses of Government institutions, 41,204 roubles 7 kop. (£4120), 17 per cent. of the total.

4. Paying off of debts, 36,777 roubles 60 kop. (£3677), 15 per cent. of the total.

5. Costs of the Zemstvo Administration, 25,554 roubles 58 kop., more than 10 per cent. of the total.

6. Roads and means of communication, 9816 roubles 90 kop. (£981), or 4 per cent. of the total.

7. Relief and other funds, 9807 roubles 21 kop. (£980), or 4 per cent. of the total.

8. Old age pensions, widows, orphans, etc., 3296 roubles 80 kop. (£329), or 1 per cent.

9. Veterinary department, 2150 roubles (£215), or less than 1 per cent.

10. Various, 1768 roubles (£176), or less than 1 per cent.

From the above figures it will be seen that one-fourth of the whole expenses is devoted to the support of hospitals, doctors, accoucheurs, nurses; and these hospitals are exclusively

devoted to the peasants, who are relieved free of charge. Another fourth of the whole amount is devoted to the support of teachers and schools, in which the peasants' children, and peasants' children alone, are educated.

In fact, 75 per cent. of the total expenses are devoted by the Zemstvo to the needs of the peasants, and 25 per cent. to the needs of the population at large, but not exclusively to any special class. The charge, therefore, of the Zemstvo being in this district an aristocratic institution falls to the ground. It might be said that although the Zemstvo devotes 75 per cent. of its expenses to the needs of the peasantry it does not give as much as it receives from them. But the Zemstvo for this district should receive out of the Zemstvo taxes paid by the peasants for 1907 86,000 roubles (the rest being paid by the landowners), and it returns them 15 per cent. of the expenses, that is to say, 182,000 roubles. In other words, the peasant receives for every rouble he pays 2 roubles 12 kopecks worth of medical aid, education, etc. There is another argument which has likewise become a catchword and is used as a party-cry against the Zemstvo,

namely, that the peasants are overburdened by Zemstvo taxation and are not in a state to be able to pay additional Zemstvo taxes. Besides the Zemstvo taxes, the following is a complete list of the total taxes paid by the peasants :—

1. State land tax, about 43,000 roubles (£4000).
2. Canton rates (a Canton is an administrative unit consisting of several villages), 89,000 roubles (£8000).
3. Village rates, 84,000 roubles (£8000).
4. Compulsory insurance, 91,000 roubles (£9000).

Total, 307,000 roubles (£30,000).

The Zemstvo taxes form, therefore, one-sixth of the total taxation, but the Zemstvo Board does not consider the peasants to be overtaxed for the following reason: During 1906 the total amount spent by the peasants in the district on alcohol was 1,800,000 roubles (£180,000). The population of the district amounts to 300,000; this means 6 roubles a head, or over 36 roubles a farm (there being

40,000 farms in the district), and as the total taxation amounts in round figures to 500,000 roubles (£50,000) the amount of taxes paid by each farm is 12 roubles 50 kopecks.

If a farm can pay a yearly voluntary tax in alcohol of 36 roubles it is absurd to speak of its being overtaxed by a yearly payment of 12 roubles 50 kopecks, and still more absurd to talk of the burden of the Zemstvo tax, which amounts to 2 roubles 15 kopecks per farm.

This is the gist of the Zemstvo report of this district for 1907. At first sight two conclusions might be drawn from it: (1) that the political agitators and the Liberal Press in general have been guilty of criminal folly in urging the peasants to boycott the Zemstvo; (2) that it is useless to try and improve the condition of peasants who refuse money for the support of the means of bettering their condition, and spend it on drink. Such conclusions would be too sweeping. Political agitators have, indeed, done endless mischief in advocating such futile and wicked measures as, for instance, the boycotting of the Zemstvos, and this testifies to their total lack of political experience; but the very existence of such

a propaganda, and the very fact that the watchwords quoted above can be accepted presupposes a frame of mind which can only result from the persistence of bad Government and the constant putting off of reform. With regard to the peasants and their drink, the autocratic system is again to a certain degree at the root of the matter, since so far from discouraging drink among the peasants, it lives upon it, the money spent on drink by the peasant forming a substantial part of the State revenue.[1] And in cases where the peasants have demanded that the Government spirit store may be closed in their village the local Government Magistrate has refused them the permission to do so. Moreover, it is sufficiently well known that the autocratic system of Government—that is to say the old régime—never of its own accord took a single serious step to raise the condition of the peasants by education, civilisation, and culture. On the contrary, it leant with all its might against the closed door.

[1] To abolish the State monopoly now a Peter the Great would be needed. However difficult the task, there can be no doubt that in the present circumstances the monopoly is a source of unmixed evil.

ANTI-SEMITISM IN RUSSIA

THE fundamental error underlying the main theories of people who write with indignation on the massacres of Jews in Russia seems to me to contain in itself everything which makes it difficult for Englishmen to understand current events in Russia. The error is that the Russian Government, which such writers would be the first to proclaim incompetent, imbecile, stupid, ineffectual, purposeless, without a policy, shifting, distracted, fickle, wavering, unstable, weak, corrupt, insolvent, dislocated, tottering, and rotten to the core, should at the same time be so competent, so united, so perfect a machine, so drastically single-minded, so unfaltering in design, and so masterly in execution that one man in St. Petersburg can by pressing a button have his anti-Semitic will carried out in the smallest detail in any village of the immense Russian Empire. The great error is to think

that attacks on Jews or anything else which has occurred in Russia during the last three years has been the result of one policy conceived by one master mind and executed by well-trained and perfectly organised instruments responding directly to that one mind. The truth is that there has been no policy in Russia during the last few years, but an ever-shifting mass of contradictory currents. During the last three years[1] it can be said that there has been no Government at all; nothing but the anarchy resulting from civil war, a civil war which is not fought in pitched battles—as that which was waged in England between the Cavaliers and the Roundheads—but carried on in the ordinary course of everyday life by what are termed peaceful citizens of the community, during their everyday avocations, by every means at their disposal. The anarchy resulting from such a state of things is rendered doubly anarchial because one of the sides in the conflict is recruited in some degree from the very officials and public servants on whose service the proper administration of the State depends.

But why, it will be asked, are the Jews

[1] 1904–7.

killed? First of all, at the root of the matter, there is the following cause: In a country which is as politically unripe and undeveloped as other European countries were in the sixteenth century, in a country which is at the present moment engaged in fighting for its Magna Charta, you are certain to find the phenomena which acccompanied similar conditions and processes in other countries. And one of the phenomena inseparable from political immaturity, in a country where the desire for reform is struggling to get the upper hand, is a prejudice against Jews and a desire to render them responsible for the evils and disorders which are the natural result of all processes of change. It was so in England in the days of King John. It was so in France at the beginning of the French Revolution. With the exception of the peasants, who follow their own line, the whole of Russia, as well as the whole of the administration, is a blend like pepper and salt of a numerically large mass of people without any political knowledge and a strong Liberal enlightened but inexperienced faction. In the administration, at all events, the Liberal element is in the minority,

since it has been drilled during ages by the old régime to a system of prejudice and reaction. The conflict which is being fought at the present moment between the obscurantist majority and the enlightened minority (beneath which the proletariat seethes independently, and from which the peasants hold aloof in the special groove of their own particular interests) is the cause of the present state of anarchy. The one consoling element in the situation is that revolutions have always been carried out by influential or energetic minorities who have finally rallied the people round them. In the obscurantist element all political prejudices have strong roots. One of the strongest of these prejudices is the anti-Semite prejudice, which all Europe shared in the sixteenth century, deeds of violence being the result, and which many countries still share at the present day. Only in such countries now (as in Hungary, for instance, where the natural anti-Semitism is stronger than it is in Russia) the Government is strong enough to quell it and to prevent its finding its natural expression.

In Russia there is no government. In Russia there is civil war. The civil war

is being carried on between two parties, one which desires reform and one which does not; one which is nationalistic, and one which is not. The Jews form one of the most effective and capable factors of the former. Therefore it is scarcely surprising that the Nationalists should attribute the whole evil to the Jews. They wage war with equal violence against all their opponents, all the "intellectuals," only it is simpler to label the whole side as consisting of Jews, and say that the whole revolution and the whole desire for reform is the work of the Jews. When these people therefore strike a blow, the first people whom they attack are the Jews. That is one reason why the Jews are killed.

The Government depends for its existence, as I have already said, on a multitude of instruments steeped in prejudice and possessing no political knowledge or experience; one fact is obvious to these people, namely, that they are being violently attacked by a formidable opponent, in which they know there is a considerable Jewish element. When they see on the other hand their own partisans attack these enemies, and in attacking them massacre

the Jews, it is scarcely likely that they will interfere to prevent the massacre of the people whom they rightly regard as playing the most prominent part in blowing them up. The attitude of the Central Government can only have an indirect influence, since it is plain, at the present moment, that there is not a Central Government strong enough to impose its will on its subordinates. If the Government were capable and strong, it could, of course, prevent the Jewish massacres, but if the Government were capable and strong there would be no revolution, and probably also no massacres to prevent. Another point lies in the fact that anti-Semitism in Russia is more artificial than in other countries. The greatest anti-Semites are men who have probably never seen a Jew in their lives. In the middle-classes in Russia the Jews assimilate themselves rapidly to the rest of the population. Among the peasants there are no Jews in the north and centre of Russia at all, and it is where they do not exist that the prejudice against them is strongest. In a word, therefore, anti-Semitism in Russia is the reflection of the present politically uncultivated condition of a great mass of people who

are concerned in the administration of the country. The massacres are the result not of any individuals, but of the general state of anarchy and civil war that exists at present in Russia.

Here is a striking example of the powerlessness of individuals in the matter. When Count Witte took office it is obvious by his acts that he tried to come to terms with all parties. He wished to restore order and to obtain a foreign loan. It would therefore be childish to suppose that he can have desired his administration to start off with a series of Pogroms, or that he would not have prevented it, had it been in his power.

But now we come to the question of the "Power" behind the throne which is supposed to have organised these massacres. That such a power or powers existed, apart from the Government, working against it obscurely, is a fact. In October 1905 this power consisted, in practice, of a police officer of inferior rank who carried on a work of printing Anti-Jewish propaganda, in which Count Witte was violently abused without the knowledge of his superiors or his colleagues. It is also a fact that they

encouraged anti-Jewish riots and attempted to organise them by distributing printed proclamations. But the existence of these powers would not have been sufficient in themselves to cause the massacres. Any one who was travelling in Russia at that moment, as I was, and who is impartial in the matter, will testify to the fact that no organisation was necessary. There existed a spontaneous counter-revolution against the "strikers," as all the "intellectuals," and not only the Jews, were then called. That the officials and the police sympathised with this counter-revolution is not surprising, since they represent the thing against which the revolution was being made. Neither General Trepoff nor any one else could, however much he had wished, have created this sporadic counter-revolution, nor could any individual in the central administration have prevented it. The counter-revolution was the logical sequence and the indispensable attendant factor of the revolution. Only the officials who did sympathise with this counter-revolution whenever massacres occurred, took no steps to prevent them, knowing that their inactivity would be approved, even if it was not actually encouraged and directly instigated by

the Dark Powers behind or alongside of the Government, and knowing also that the Government itself would be powerless to punish them. They felt they were on the Right side and that, whoever might be blamed, they would be immune.

With regard to the Jewish massacres, which took place in the south-west of Russia before the revolutionary movement, there is more to be said. The anti-Jewish riots there are mainly the result of the special legislation to which the Jews are subjected. But I will discuss this matter in the next chapter.

PRINCE OUROUSOV'S MEMOIRS[1]

A SMALL book has lately been published in Russia which perhaps throws more light on the subject of the Russian Administration and the causes of the troubles through which Russia is at present going than any other work which has appeared during the last five years in Russia or elsewhere. This book is a volume of Memoirs by Prince Ourousov. Prince Ourousov took his degree in the Moscow University in 1885, and after being employed in the Zemstvo administration in the government of Kalouga he was appointed Vice-Governor of the province of Tambov in 1902; towards the end of May 1903, he suddenly, and, as far as he was concerned, unexpectedly, received a telegram from the Ministry of Home Affairs appointing him Governor of

[1] Since this was written a translation of Prince Ourousov's book has been published in English by Messrs. Harper & Bros.

Bessarabia. The volume which has now appeared from his pen consists of a record of his administrative rule in Bessarabia, which lasted from 1903–4. It is a portion of a larger work covering a period from 1872–1906, the publication of which Prince Ourousov has put off to a later date.

Prince Ourousov writes in the preface that he has been led to publish this section of his Memoirs immediately by the rapid development of political life in Russia; he considers that nothing which can throw any light on the conditions of administrative life, the reform and transformation of which are the main object and task of the thinking population of Russia at this moment, should be concealed, and in publishing these recollections it is his object to give an accurate account, derived from first-hand knowledge, of those administrative proceedings with regard to which Prince Ourousov states there prevails a completely wrong impression, side by side with wild exaggerations. The interest and importance of the book are immense, and it is earnestly to be hoped that the book will speedily be translated into English, because it provides the exact kind of

knowledge for which Englishmen are continually asking in regard to Russia.

There are two questions which Englishmen who are interested in Russian political life are continually asking: first, "What is it all about?" and, secondly, "Why are the Jews killed in Russia?" In connection with the first question I have heard Englishmen, after their first journey to Russia, ask questions such as these: "What do the Liberals want? Do they know themselves?" On the other hand, we have been flooded with books of all kinds by Englishmen, by Russians, and by Germans, who have obscured the Jewish and indeed every other question in their zeal to prove that the Central Government in Russia has for the last five years combined the qualities which a Babu journalist in India once attributed to Lord Cromer: "The oiliness of a Chadband and the malignity of a fiend."

This book of Prince Ourousov's throws a flood of light on both these questions. It shows, not by any enunciation of doctrinaire principles or political theories but by a record of facts, the causes of the evils of the present administrative system, and it points out (by

fact, and not by theory) where reform is needed, why reform is needed, and how it can be effected. It also provides the reader with a clear idea of the Jewish question and its possible solution. Prince Ourousov was a member of the first Duma. The speech he made in a debate on the Jewish question not only made a great stir in Russia and in Europe, but was certainly the most statesmanlike utterance that has proceeded from the lips of a member of the Opposition since the struggle for constitutional reform opened in 1905. Prince Ourousov's plain speaking on this occasion won for him the applause of the Liberals and the hatred of the reactionaries. It must also be borne in mind that Prince Ourousov was a member of Count Witte's administration before the opening of the first Duma, which he left owing to his disgust at the proceedings of certain officials connected with the Minister of the Interior. He will not, therefore, be suspected of partiality towards the autocratic régime and its scaffolding of bureaucrats. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable to find in this book no trace of unfairness or exaggeration towards the representatives of the old régime. The book is

fair, luminous, and honest, and here at last we have the truth about Russia unleavened by political bias, unvarnished by cheap sensationalism, and not distorted by doctrinaire principles and theory. Besides which the book is in itself, and on account of the facts it records, of surpassing interest and amusement to the ordinary reader.

When Prince Ourousov was appointed Governor of Bessarabia he says that he knew no more about that province than he did of New Zealand. The foreign newspapers had been full of the Jewish Pogrom which had occurred in Kishineff from 7th April to 9th April 1903. They had openly accused the Russian Government of having instigated the disorders, and a letter was published in an English newspaper, said to be written by Plehve, then Minister of the Interior, to the Governor of Bessarabia, von Raaben, containing clear hints not to interfere with the doings of the anti-Jewish rioters. I will quote Prince Ourousov's appreciation of this letter later on. Before leaving for Kishineff Prince Ourousov was received by Plehve. The Minister's final injunction to him, he says, was, word for word, the following:

"I give you no advice and no directions. You are entirely independent. Act as you please, as long as the results are good. I will say only one final word: Let us have as few speeches as possible, and as little sentimental Hebrophilism." These words, Prince Ourousov adds, proved Plehve's perspicacity, since during his Administration he made several speeches, and he left Kishineff with the established reputation of being a Hebrophil.

When Prince Ourousov arrived in Kishineff he was met by his predecessor, General von Raaben. In mentioning him Prince Ourousov writes as follows: "I wish before all things in the clearest possible manner to refute the accusations made against Raaben of complicity in the Jewish Pogrom, and to explode the legend of the letter which he is said to have received on this subject from the Minister of the Interior. Apart from the fact that Plehve insisted on the peremptory dismissal of Raaben, it is improbable that the Minister would have relied in such a case on a man whose gentleness and straightness would have excluded all possibility of his executing such a cruel, diabolical plan. I do not mean to imply that I consider the

Minister capable of having been the initiator of the Pogrom. On the other hand, I think that Plehve was too clever and too experienced to have recourse to such means in his struggle with the Jews, in spite of his hatred towards them. But if Plehve might consider that the Pogrom would have disagreeable consequences for the Government, Raaben was incapable, owing to his character and his qualities, of organising and executing a massacre. This is not only my own conviction, but it is shared by all his fellow-workers, and by the local representatives of the Jewish commune whose opinion is of special weight."

Further on in the book Prince Ourousov deals with the question of the origin of the Kishineff Pogrom in 1903 in greater detail. In the Pogrom of April 1903, forty-two Jews were killed, and the survivors incurred material damage amounting to at least a million roubles (£100,000). What were its causes? Prince Ourousov deals first with the theory that it was directly initiated by the Minister of the Interior. He disbelieves in this theory for two reasons: first, that in the Department of the Secret Police, to which he had access before going to

Kishineff, and in which he made a searching investigation in all that related to Kishineff, there was not a hint that the Administration was inclined to consider desirable any anti-Jewish riots whatever or even anti-Jewish demonstrations. Moreover, at this moment this Department was in charge of M. A. Lopouchin, who has become famous for having brought to light the anti-Jewish propaganda of certain police officials in the autumn of 1905, which led to Pogroms, a man who was, and is, well known for his straightness and his strong Liberal bias. Secondly, Prince Ourousov does not believe Plehve to have been capable of such gross thoughtlessness as to place proof of his complicity in the hands of a Governor whom he scarcely knew, and whom he did not trust. Raaben was, moreover, a gentleman; he paid little attention to his superiors, and lived on excellent terms with the Jews, towards whom he acted with great tolerance. Moreover, he was summarily dismissed on account of the Pogrom, and was not rehabilitated in the public service until after the death of Plehve.

Prince Ourousov then considers the theory

that the Pogrom was a sudden and irrepressible outburst of long-suppressed fury, a payment of old scores, a movement of elemental force and anger against the Jewish race. He holds that this explanation is one-sided, untrue, and entirely artificial. "It is impossible to deny," he writes, "that in the governments inhabited by the Jews, Jews will be more easily the objects of assault and robbery than any one else. And the chief causes of this are the special laws which develop among the population a special point of view with regard to the Jews, namely, that they are citizens without rights, and a dangerous element in the State. One can admit that in certain cases questions of race and religion cause the Jews to clash with the rest of the population . . . there are also complaints of Jewish exploitation, although they far more often proceed from the outside observers of this exploitation than from among the people exploited. But all these reasons are not sufficient to cause a Pogrom; an immediate cause is necessary for the explosion of popular passions, and it has been impossible to discover that immediate cause; on the other hand, in Kishineff in 1903 certain phenomena

were observed. The daily Press played a large part in preparing a suitable frame of mind for a Pogrom among the population, and the preponderant part was played by the local newspaper of Kroushevan (the notorious anti-Jewish agitator), and publications issued in St. Petersburg of similar colour. These newspapers were filled with accusations against the Jews, and with facts and comments calculated to stir up popular passion. The authority of Kroushevan, in the eyes of his readers, was to a certain extent strengthened by the open protection he received from the chief administrative Department dealing with the Press, the result of which made it impossible for the local administration to moderate the anti-Jewish ardour. (Prince Ourousov develops this point at length, pointing out that complaints against the violence of the local Press had no result. The agitators were looked upon by the Press authorities in St. Petersburg as patriots.) The action of the police in Kishineff, as probably in other places, where the Jewish population preponderated, gave rise to the view that anti-Jewish action was looked on with favour, and the conviction became widely spread among

the ignorant masses that there was no penalty for hostile action against the Jews; so much so that the legend arose in Kishineff that the Emperor had authorised a three days' Pogrom in Kishineff, and early on the morning of the third day of the disorders a crowd of peasants was stopped by a police officer; they had come from a neighbouring village in full consciousness of a duty to be performed: to beat the Jews, by order of the Emperor. I am especially anxious to underline this characteristic of the Kishineff Pogrom. The chief motive of the rioters was neither hatred nor revenge, but the fulfilment of such action which in the opinion of some coincided with the aims and desires of the Government, and in the opinion of others was even authorised, and finally in the eyes of the ignorant peasantry was the fulfilment of the Imperial Word. Therefore, in my opinion, it is impossible to absolve the Central Administration from *moral* responsibility in the Kishineff plunderings and murders. I consider our Government guilty on account of the patronage afforded to a narrow Nationalist idea, on account of its short-sighted and summary dealings towards the

provinces inhabited by alien races, and on account of the fact that this policy fostered mutual hatred and distrust among the various nationalities; finally, because the central power encouraged these brutal phenomena, which disappear as soon as the Government openly declares that Pogroms are a crime for which the local administration will have to answer."

Prince Ourousov concludes, therefore, that whereas the idea that Plehve had deliberately organised anti-Jewish riots is a legend, nevertheless his Government cannot be absolved from the suspicion that it exerted indirect influence on the riots through the action of minor anti-Jewish-minded officials who knew that their action would not meet with disapproval alone, and by its constant refusal to check the violence of the anti-Jewish Press. If one realises, therefore, that the Pogrom was not a natural and fortuitous occurrence, it is morally not difficult to say that it was effected "by order." But the chief cause of the mischief which makes such riots possible is the existence of the special legislation to which the Jews are subjected in Russia. As long as one part of the population is legally and civilly inferior to another part, the legally

superior portion will always, especially if it consists of uneducated peasants, think that it is acting patriotically in ill-treating the legally inferior portion. Moreover, the endless bother incurred by every small official, owing to the carrying out or the neglect of the innumerable preventive regulations respecting the Jews, is sufficient in itself to embitter the local officials against the Jews. I have selected this portion of Prince Ourousov's book out of many other interesting things, and dwelt upon it at length, because the question is still vital and actual.

Anti-Jewish riots occurred in Odessa in August 1907. The violence of the anti-Jewish Press and the reluctance of the central authorities to keep it in check were as much features then as they were in 1903. When a newly appointed Governor-General declared in Odessa that he was not afraid of protecting the Jews because he considered them equal in the eyes of the law to other citizens, he was considered to have done an act of daring courage. Finally, it is plain not only from Prince Ourousov's book, but also from the experience of all capable officials in Russia, that as soon as energetic measures are taken against anti-Jewish agitators

the riots cease. Only the sad fact remains that, as Prince Ourousov points out, since 1903 there is not a high post in Russia which has not changed hands: but the unfortunate thing is that the changes have one and all been for the worse; for M. Stolypin, or whoever advises him in these matters, lacks even a particle of the quality which Napoleon possessed in the highest degree: an eye for men.[1] The result is that excellent Governors (among them staunch Conservatives) have been dismissed on ridiculous pretexts, and have in some cases been replaced by unamiable and incompetent blunderers.

[1] It should be said, in justice to M. Stolypin, that it is extremely difficult to find people to accept these posts. Those who are capable of filling them competently refuse them.

STORIES

POGROM

COUNT X. was a landowner who lived in the south of Russia, not far from one of the large manufacturing towns. He spent the whole summer in a small country house, about six miles from the town, with his wife and children. Not far from the house, at about a mile's distance, was a village which was bigger than an ordinary village and less big than an ordinary town. The greater part of the population consisted of Jews; they were poor Jews mostly, some of them very poor indeed. The Count and his wife knew the people of the place well, and their relations with the poor Jews were of the friendliest description; they were constantly employing them to do small jobs, and their special friends were the tailor and the bootmaker,

whose shops were in the Jewish bazaar, the poorest quarter of the place. The boot-maker's name was Gertzel, and the tailor was called Daniel.

When the Dreyfus case was drawing to its close, the whole of this population was in a great state of excitement, and the Countess X. used every afternoon to go and give Gertzel and Daniel the latest news. Just before the result of the final court-martial at Rennes was known, Countess X. received a telegram from a friend of hers abroad saying that Dreyfus had been acquitted. She went post haste with the news to the village, and soon the whole place was in a tumult of thanksgiving and rejoicing. Next day, when the authentic news of the verdict arrived, she was obliged to go and tell the disappointing news.

During all those summer months nothing else had been discussed in this little place; and, as everywhere else, the world was split up into two factions; and in the Countess' family, while she and her husband believed violently in the innocence of Dreyfus, her brother-in-law and her uncle were equally

firmly convinced of his guilt, and equally violent in their affirmations of it. In the village there was a strong orthodox faction which earnestly longed for the death of the traitor, and the Jewish populace cared more for his acquittal than for their own affairs. When Countess X. imparted to them the disappointing verdict, they lamented bitterly: all the more so on account of the false joy they had experienced the day before. And in the whole population there were no two beings more downcast and upset by the result than Gertzel and Daniel.

It was in the autumn of that year, shortly after the result of the Dreyfus case became known, that one morning Gertzel and Daniel appeared in Countess X.'s garden and requested to see her.

Gertzel was a thin, solidly built man, with dark tangled hair and mild soft eyes. He had a thick, untidy beard, a dirty loose shirt with a torn collar. Daniel was smaller, and younger; he wore no beard, and his eyes were penetrating and glistening; he was quiet and modest, and was passionately fond of reading books.

The Countess came out and asked them whether they wanted work.

"No, it is not work that we want," said Gertzel, "we want to know if we may bring our furniture to-day, and put it in your stables? It will not take up very much room," he added.

"Certainly you may," said the Countess; "but why do you want to get rid of your furniture? Is it your feast day?"

"No, it is very far from being our feast day—it is little enough a feast day," said Gertzel; "but we want you in your kindness to let us store our furniture in your stables—in the barn perhaps. It will take little room. There are some chairs, a table, and the tools and implements that are necessary for our work. And Daniel has a lot of books he would like to bring, too—some of those which your Brightness gave him, if your Brightness remembers, last year."

"You may certainly bring your things," said the Countess, "and put them in the stables or in the barn or anywhere else you please. But why do you want to do this?"

"It is because," said Gertzel, "to-morrow morning there will be a Pogrom."

"How a Pogrom?" asked the Countess.

"A Pogrom," said Gertzel, "an ordinary Pogrom. It has been arranged; the date is fixed for to-morrow. It will be all right if we may store our furniture in your barn; and if we may ask as much, we have several friends who would like to do the same. For in that case all will be well, and we shall incur no loss. We cannot afford the loss this year: we are all poor people; we cannot afford to lose our property."

"But," said the Countess, "I don't understand. Who is going to make this Pogrom? The people here?"

"God forbid!" said Gertzel. "We are living with all the people here in peace. They are coming from O. (O. was the big manufacturing town) and from A. (another town about fifty miles distant). They are coming by train; they will arrive early to-morrow morning. The Pogrom will take place in the morning; it will be all over by the evening, and they will go back by the night train."

"But who?" the Countess asked, "and what are they?"

"They say they have been sent; some people say it is the Tsar's orders; others that it is the Governor, but what does it matter? In any case, they have been sent to make a Pogrom."

"Surely," said the Countess, "if you inform the police, measures will be taken to prevent this. It is absurd! It can't possibly happen!"

"It must be," said Gertzel, and Daniel nodded his head in agreement, and repeated: "It must be: it is so decreed!"

"It has all been arranged," said Gertzel. "To-morrow there will be the Pogrom. Let us bring our furniture to your barn, our furniture and our friends' furniture, and all will be well."

"It must be prevented!" said the Countess, "You must go to the police."

"It is useless," said Gertzel; "it cannot be prevented; it has been arranged for to-morrow."

And no argument was of any avail; they merely repeated over and over again that the Pogrom was to be, and they left, with tears of gratitude in their eyes for having been

allowed to store their furniture in the Count's stables.

The Countess went to her husband and related what had happened. They sent for Ivan, the moujik, who washed the plates, and who, being a native of the place, would be likely to know what was going on, and they asked him if it were true that there was to be a Pogrom.

"Yes, your Brightness," he said, "it is quite true. There will be a Pogrom to-morrow; it has been arranged."

"Who has arranged it?" asked the Countess.

"I cannot know," answered Ivan; "but it has been arranged."

"You mean the people here?" asked the Countess, "they will attack the Jews?"

"God forbid!" said Ivan. "The Jews are a nice people. We live with them in peace; but everything may happen. Sometimes an orthodox Russian is worse than a Jew. But the Jews were much offended by the last Pogrom, and they have been giving false evidence, and attributing to many people crimes which they had not committed."

"When was the last Pogrom?" asked the Countess.

"It was in the spring," said Ivan, "when your Brightness was away."

"And did they kill the Jews?" asked the Count.

"God forbid!" Ivan answered. "They sinned a little, and they destroyed some of the Jews' property, but murder—God forbid! they were innocent of that!"

"But who is going to do this?" asked the Count.

"They will come from various places," said Ivan. "They will come by the night train from O. and A. They will arrive in the morning; there will be a Pogrom, and they will go away."

"But who?" asked the Count.

"Those who are sent," said Ivan.

"But who is sending them?" repeated the Count.

"I cannot know," said Ivan.

"How do you know this is so?" asked the Countess.

"Everybody knows it," said Ivan—"all the morning carts have been arriving from

all the neighbouring villages just as when there is a fair."

"What for?" asked the Countess.

"To take away all that is left after the Pogrom," said Ivan. "It is advantageous for the peasants to get the property of the Jews and to pay nothing at all for it."

"It must be prevented," said the Count.

Ivan smiled, and merely repeated that there would be a Pogrom on the following day, for so it had been arranged, and nothing more could be got out of him.

The Count went and interviewed the local police sergeant and spoke seriously to him about the matter. The police sergeant shrugged his shoulders and wrung his hands, and said that he could do nothing; what was his authority in the place? What could he and two policemen do against the populace? "If there is to be a Pogrom there will be a Pogrom," he said. "We can do nothing. We should only be killed too. There is nothing to be done."

All day long Jews from the village who knew the Count and the Countess came to their house, bringing with them furniture and

goods of every description, till the whole stables were filled with them, and all day long large creaking carts drove slowly into the village from the neighbouring villages, bringing the peasants who had come to bear off the booty when the Pogrom should be over. And they met and conversed with the Jews in the friendliest manner possible, discussing the Pogrom merely as an event of not very considerable importance, but as a fact, such as an eclipse or a feast day, about which there could be no possible doubt, and no possible change.

The Countess had a further interview with Sasha, the cook, a peasant woman who was also a native of the place; but she, like Ivan, merely repeated over and over again that the Pogrom was fixed for the morrow, and that it would be executed by people sent for the purpose, who would come by train from the various big towns.

The Count went once more to the police sergeant, and told him to take some steps; he replied that he would do his best, but that he was a married man, and the Count must have pity on him, that there were no steps to be

taken—that he could do nothing—that nothing could be done—that nobody could do anything!

The next morning, as soon as the Countess awoke, Sasha the cook came into her room and said—

"There will be no Pogrom: it has been put off!"

THE ANTICHRIST

IN the village of X., which is in the government of O., in Central Russia, there were two men: one was called Michael and the other was called Andrew. They were both deeply religious and concerned with the things of a world which is not this world. They spent days and nights in reading the Scriptures and in pondering over the meaning of difficult texts. They had both resolved in their early youth never to marry, for they considered that the human race had something so radically bad about it that the sooner it came to an end the better. They decided, therefore, that it was their duty not to prolong its existence. But when they attained to early manhood the parents of Andrew contracted an alliance for him, and he was wedded to a girl named Masha. Their union was not blessed with offspring, and Michael, who continued to lead a

solitary life, with rigorous fasting and uninterrupted meditation, said such was the will of Providence. The young wife of Andrew did not share the views of the mystic, and she yearned to be the mother of a child. Unbeknown to her husband, she sought one night the Wise Woman of the village, who was skilled in finding lost objects, and who was versed in the properties of herbs, and knew the words of power which cured the sick of dreadful disease.

Masha sought the Wise Woman in the night, and told her her trouble. The Wise Woman lit a candle, muttered a brief saying in which the name of King David was mentioned, and that of a darker Prince. She gave her a small green herb, telling her to eat it on the first moonless night in June, and that her wish would be fulfilled.

Masha obeyed the Wise Woman's behest. A year passed by and the wish of her heart was granted. A son was born to her. And Masha and Andrew greatly rejoiced over this. But when Michael heard of it his spirit was troubled. He consulted the Scriptures, and the meaning of the event became clear to him. He sought Andrew and said to him—

"This is the work of Satan. You have dabbled in black magic, and you are in danger of eternal perdition. Moreover, the truth has been revealed to me—the child which has been born to you is none other than the Antichrist, of which the Book of Revelation tells. And that is why our poor country is distressful, seething with trouble, sedition, and revolt, and why our Sovereign is vexed, and why evil days have fallen upon Russia, our Mother. We must slay the Antichrist, and immediately the dark cloud will be lifted from our land, and peace and prosperity shall come to us once more."

That night Michael convoked Andrew and Masha to his house. It was a small, one-storeyed, wooden cottage, thatched with straw. It was swept and clean, and in one corner of the room were many glittering images of the Queen of Heaven and the Saints, before which burned small red lights; and besides this Michael had erected a shrine on which more than a dozen thin waxen tapers were burning. Michael convoked Andrew and his wife to his house, and the elders of the village also, and they spent an hour in chanting and in prayer,

each holding a candle in his hand, but to the priest he said no word of this matter, for he did not trust him nor believe him to be possessed of celestial grace. After they had prayed for an hour, Michael said to Masha—

"Go home and fetch your child."

Masha obeyed, and returned presently, bearing the infant for whose advent she had so sorely longed, and which in coming had been the cause of such joy to her. Michael took the infant and said—

"In the body of this child is the power of Satan: in the body of this child is the Antichrist of whom the Scriptures tell—this is the cause of the misfortunes which have visited our dear country, and vexed the spirit of our Lord and Sovereign."

He then extinguished all the lights and the tapers in the room: it was pitch dark, and no sound was heard save the muttering of Michael's continuous prayer. Masha trembled, for she was afraid. Michael took the infant. It lay quite still, for it was asleep.

And as Michael took the infant he said: "We must exorcise the spirit and slay the Antichrist, who has been born in this child

to be the bane of Russia and to vex the heart of our Sovereign!"

And Michael bade the people who were gathered together in the room—there were five men, the eldest in the village, and seven women—be prepared for the great event, and he lifted his voice, and in a wailing whisper he addressed the Evil Spirit.

"Evil Spirit," he said, "Antichrist, of whom the Holy Scriptures tell, through the dark dealings of our brother Andrew and his wife, who have trafficked with Satan, thou hast found a way into the body of this child, but it is written that the troubles of Russia and of our Sovereign shall be at their thickest at thy advent, but shall diminish and pass away with thy disappearance. Evil Spirit, I conjure thee, leave the body of this child."

Then the infant cried plaintively, twice.

"Hark!" said Michael, in a solemn voice, "the spirit of the Antichrist is speaking. Hark to the cry of Satan, who is leaving the body of the child. Pray, pray with all your might, and help me to slay the Antichrist."

And fear came upon everybody, nor durst

they utter in the stillness, but their spirits were spellbound and seemed to be drawn, tense and taut as stretched wires, in that effort of prayer for the passing of the spirit of Satan and for the slaying of the Antichrist.

The infant cried once again—and then it cried no more! . . .

"The Antichrist has been slain," said Michael, and a deeper stillness came on the assembly. "The Antichrist," said Michael, "must be buried." And he walked out of his cottage into the yard where in a shed his horse and cart were kept. He unloosed his horse and said: "Whither the horse shall lead, thither must we follow."

The horse trotted slowly down the deserted street. That night there was neither moon nor stars in the sky. Beyond the village was a marshy plain. It was just before dawn, and in the thick velvet darkness of the sky there was a glow as of a living sapphire. They reached the marsh, and there the horse stopped, and began to browse.

"It is here that the Antichrist must be buried," said Michael. And they buried the infant by the reedy marsh. And all this time

neither Andrew nor Masha, nor the elders, nor the women who were there, spoke a single word; and when they had finished burying the infant a breeze came from the east, and the dawn, grey and chilly, trembled over the horizon, and the wild ducks rose from the marsh, uttered their cry, and flew away into distance, seeking the fields.

The spell that had kept this assembly mute and speechless vanished with the vanishing darkness. The noises of life began: the creaking of carts was heard from the village, and the cocks were crowing.

Andrew and Masha looked at each other, and a great fear came upon them, and indeed upon all the assembly, for what they had done. They did not speak, but returned severally to their homes; and Masha, when she reached her home, too frightened to cry or even to speak, sat motionless before the swinging cradle which hung from the roof of her cottage, and which was now empty. And Andrew durst not look at her. Presently he left the house and sought the dwelling of the priest. The priest let him in, and there he found Michael, who, likewise overcome with terror

and misgivings as to what had been done, had come to tell the story.

The priest reported the whole matter to the local policeman, who in his turn reported it to the police captain of the district, and three days afterwards Michael, Andrew, Masha, and the others were locked up in the prison of a neighbouring town, and a day after their arrest an old woman of the village sought out the police captain and asked to see him.

"I was present," she said to him, "at the slaying of the Antichrist. I held the candle in my hands myself when the evil spirit was exorcised, and the cause of all Russia's trouble was destroyed. They say the Tsar has given money to the others for having destroyed his enemy; and I, who am poor and old, and who was there also, have received nothing. Let me receive my due. Give me the money that the Tsar owes me, for I also helped to slay the Antichrist."

This story is true. It happened last September, and was recorded in the newspapers, with many more details than I have told. And at the station of Kozlov, as I have

already related, in the government of Tambov, between the hours of midnight and 2 a.m., a railway guard told it to myself and a news-vendor, and when he had finished telling it he sighed and bewailed the blindness of his fellow-creatures, the peasants of Russian villages, who, as he wisely said, had so much kindness in their hearts, but were often led through their ignorance to do dreadful deeds.

"DIRGE IN MARRIAGE"

THE following story was told me by a doctor. It happened in the village in the government of Tambov. There was a peasant called Vichareff who had three daughters ; one of them was called Anoushka, one Douniasha, and the third Natasha. Their father was well off, but extraordinarily close-fisted ; his thirst for land and his ambition to accumulate were unlimited. He arranged an advantageous match for his eldest daughter, Douniasha, and was exerting all his wits to find a husband for his younger daughter who should be equally well-to-do, so that the two weddings might take place on the same day, and thereby save him trouble and expense. His third daughter was considered to be too young as yet to marry.

Now Anoushka repeated over and over again, not without tears, that she did not wish

to be married; but her father and her mother (whose will, always feeble, had now completely ceased to work, owing to years of unceasing compliance with the views and the wishes of her domineering husband) paid no attention to this.

At last Vichareff succeeded in striking a bargain with one of his neighbours named Kroustalieff, the purport of which was that Kroustalieff's son, Dimitri, should marry Anoushka, in return for which Vichareff promised to get him some horses at an unusually low price, since Vichareff was a horse-dealer on a small scale. The bargain was struck, and the matter was arranged, and Anoushka was told that she was to marry Dimitri. Dimitri was a young man aged eighteen, nice-looking, and not unintelligent; notwithstanding this, when Anoushka was informed of the matter, she burst into a storm of tears, and declared no power on earth could induce her to marry him. Her father and mother, however, took no notice of her tears and her protest, and invited their friends to an evening party to celebrate the engagement. Now the reason Anoushka was determined not to marry

Dimitri, was that she loved her sister's affianced husband, Ivan. He, for his part, was quite unaware of this, and indeed nobody knew of it in the whole village except an old man, Alexis by name, who was said to be versed in astrology and whom the peasants often consulted in matters which concerned the other world. Anoushka went to Alexis and told him her story; he promised to cast her horoscope and to see what could be done, and he bade her return to him in a few days. She did so. When Alexis saw her he shook his head.

"There is nothing to be done, child," he said, "the stars are against you: you must wed Dimitri; but no good will come of it, neither to you nor to him."

Then Anoushka asked him if he could not give her a love philtre or a charm, which would make Ivan love her.

"I can give you a charm," said Alexis, "and I can give you love philtres, but I cannot turn the stars from their courses, nor prevent you wedding Dimitri in the church, although no good shall come of it, either to you or to him. There is nothing to be done, save to

obey; this matter is the business of Providence."

And so Anoushka went home, taking neither philtre nor charm, and spent the whole day weeping at her work, but her parents did not even trouble to scold her, so surely did they know that their will would be accomplished. And in the evenings Ivan and Dimitri would come to their cottage and sing and play on the Babalaika; and while Douniasha and Ivan looked at each other with love, and spoke in whispers of a thousand nothings, like two happy birds twittering in a tree, Anoushka said no word to Dimitri, although he was gentle with her and civil-spoken; and he attributed her silence and her gloomy look to bashfulness and modesty.

When the evening of Vichareff's party arrived, the whole village came to his house. And some of the gentry from the landowner's house came to look on at the dancing. The small room of Vichareff's cottage was crowded to overflowing, a little space being left in the centre for the dancers. Outside the cottage there were more people, those for whom there was no room inside, and they crowded round

the door and windows, straining and craning their necks to get a glimpse of the festivity. Those who were at the window, finding that the window-panes got in their way, broke the glass and put their heads through the empty sash. Inside, some one was playing on a large concertina, and the dancers walked up and down the room with faces of grave and solemn indifference, performing the necessary steps and singing the usual chant. The couples paced to and fro opposite each other, and at the end of every verse of the chanted music, each girl was kissed by her partner.

When this dance was over sunflower seeds were handed round on a plate to the guests, and glasses of tea were brought for the gentry; then a soldier who was home on leave, performed a solo in the centre of the room, dancing and stamping according to intricate rule, until he could no more.

Douniasha looked radiantly happy; she was dressed in pale green, and wore a necklace of bright beads; but Anoushka, in her pink silk finery, looked as white as a ghost, and said no word during the whole evening. And when Dimitri danced with her and kissed her, she

seemed no more to notice him than if he had been a phantom.

They danced all night, but never once during all those hours of mirth and gaiety, did Anoushka smile.

Three weeks later preparations were made for the wedding. Vichareff bought provisions; the wedding was to be a magnificent one. The landowner lent his horses, and Anoushka and Douniasha were to be driven to the church in two troikas. Dimitri had a new salmon-pink shirt for the occasion, and in his high boots there was an unusual number of creases; he appeared with pride to show himself to Anoushka, but she took no notice of him. On her wedding day she was paler than ever, and her eyes were red with crying. Dimitri asked her if anything was the matter with her and whether she was not feeling well; but she said that she was perfectly well. So he attributed her strange appearance and ways to the inscrutable habits of womankind, and asked no further questions. But, shortly before the wedding pairs were to leave for the church, Anoushka went to her mother and said that she could not marry Dimitri. Her mother

said that she supposed the child had another sweetheart; such was the way of girls. But if she had, it was of no consequence, she said; she would soon forget him. In any case she was to marry Dimitri, and that immediately.

Then Anoushka broke into a passion of weeping, and begged and implored her mother not to let her marry Dimitri; and her mother lost patience, and said she deserved to be beaten; that she never heard such nonsense in her life.

"Now stop that crying," she ended by saying, "or I will call your father, and he shall put an end to this nonsense!"

Then Anoushka dried her tears and said: "Very well, since it is so, let it be so. But I will never be Dimitri's wife!"

Then the troikas drove up to the cottage door, their bells jangling and tinkling, and the bridal couples all in their best clothes were driven off at a canter to the church, and the wedding took place. And Anoushka and Douniasha were crowned with gold crowns, and walked round the altar (which was placed in the centre of the church with a tall candle on it) in memory of David dancing round the Ark,

according to the rite of the Orthodox Church. After the ceremony was over, they drove home once more and the feasting, which had already lasted one day, began again. The two bridegrooms were taken by their friends through the village, stopping at nearly every cottage to have their healths drunk, and to join in the toasts, while crowds of children followed them, some of them beating small tom-toms and scrambling every fifty yards or so for sugar, which was thrown to them in handfuls by the bridegrooms and their friends.

Towards the evening the bridegrooms were fairly intoxicated, although they could both walk quite straight and speak without difficulty. In Vichareff's house an uproarious feast ended in general music and dancing, which took place on the green in front of the cottage. In the yard behind the house a special chamber, like a tent, had been made for Anoushka, hung with pieces of striped linen. The dancing company ultimately moved from Vichareff's house and visited various parts of the village, settling now here and now there, and gaining fresh liveliness and zest at each place where it settled. Anoushka was left alone, and shortly

afterwards Dimitri returned. He went into the cottage and saw that it was empty. He then went into the yard and into the tent which had been prepared; and glimmering in the darkness he saw the tall white figure of Anoushka standing up. He called to her, but she did not answer. Being half-intoxicated he could not see clearly, and he was not sure whether it was in reality Anoushka or not that he seemed to see. He called once more, as loudly as he could, and, receiving no answer, he walked up to her and grasped her by the arm, and as he did so her whole body swung backwards and forwards as though it were dancing on air. Then in a moment he grew sober, for he realised that Anoushka had hanged herself, and he went and shouted for the neighbours. The body was cut down, and efforts were made to restore her to life, but she had already been dead about an hour, and there was nothing more to be done.

The next day Dimitri's father and Vichareff held a consultation; Vichareff even said that he considered his bargain cancelled, and Dimitri's father, after a great deal of argument, refused to admit that this was so. Ultimately Vichareff's

cunning mind found a way out of the matter. "Why should not Dimitri," he said, "marry Natasha my third daughter? It is true she is only fifteen, but she is a good strong girl, and will make him a good wife. And then," he added, "we can have the wedding at once, so that the food shall not be wasted, and we shall thus be spared the burden and expense of two weddings."

So this was arranged, and the priest was informed of it. But the priest declined to celebrate the wedding, and said that such a proceeding was unchristian and inhuman; they must be married, he said, after a decent interval of time had elapsed.

Vichareff and Dimitri's father were forced to comply, for public opinion in the village was entirely on the side of the priest; but the wedding food, so far from being wasted, did double service all the same, for it served to satisfy the guests who thronged to Anoushka's funeral; so that in these days in the village there was both dirge in marriage and mirth in funeral.

THE GOVERNOR'S NIECE

IRINA ANDREEVNA T—— was a fair-haired, blue-eyed girl aged twenty-two. She went to lectures at the St. Petersburg University in the daytime; in the evening she went to balls and parties. Irina was an orphan, but she lived with an aunt of hers in a large house in St. Petersburg, where on Thursday evenings there was always a considerable gathering of girls and young men, officers chiefly.

When the war broke out in 1904, Irina spent all the days at the hospital, learning to tend the sick and the wounded, and making bandages and clothes for the soldiers at the war. In 1905, when peace was declared, and followed by tumultuous events, she was deeply infected by the atmosphere of excitement which prevailed everywhere, the wild hopes and the great expectations. She went to public

meetings and attended private discussions—the private discussions of small groups of students, men and women, which took place in private houses. All the people who attended these informal meetings belonged, as far as their political opinions were concerned, to the Extreme Left. Some of them called themselves Social Democrats, others Social Revolutionaries. Irina's special friend belonged to the extremer shade of the latter party. Irina's nature was enthusiastic; she hated compromise. She wanted all or nothing. Violent means such as terrorism or assassination seemed to her of no account where the cause was great and the end noble.

As the months went on, she became more and more closely bound to the more ardent spirits among the Social Revolutionaries, and they regarded her as one of their most inspiring leaders. But she continued during all this time to live the ordinary life of the St. Petersburg society, to talk and dance with the young officers at evening parties, and go to the opera, and to take part in sledging and ski-ing parties. Neither her relations nor any of her ordinary acquaintances suspected the

intensity of the inner life that was going on within her. They knew she was interested in politics, but so was everybody else. Her friends chaffed her for being what they called "red"; but then a great many people were red.

In February 1906, her uncle, General Steinberg, a brother of her deceased father, was appointed to the Governorship of O., a large manufacturing city. It was just at this time that she joined the branch of the Social Revolutionaries which called themselves Maximalists, and whose business it was to remove by violence the persons whom they considered to be obstacles in the way of their cause. These people, when they had decided that some one should be removed, drew lots among themselves as to who should accomplish the deed of destruction.

It so happened that, in February 1906, the Executive Committee of the Maximalists condemned General Steinberg to death for suppressing certain riots in the town of O., during which affray a certain number of workmen had been killed and wounded. Lots were drawn as to who should kill General Steinberg —and the lot fell to Irina, his niece. She

received the decision with calm, and made preparations for leaving St. Petersburg. She told her aunt she was going to Moscow to stay with some intimate friends of the family : from Moscow it is but a short distance to O. Her relations saw her off at the station, also a young man in the regiment of the Chevalier-Gardes, who was particularly devoted to her. She seemed in excellent spirits.

When she arrived at Moscow she went straight to O., and stayed at the hotel, from whence she wrote a letter to her uncle saying that she was on her way to the estate of her St. Petersburg relations, which was a night's journey from O. Everything was made easy for her, for the next morning she received a letter from him asking her to come to luncheon at half-past twelve.

The next morning at the appointed time she started off in a sledge to the Governor's house, wrapped in a fur *shuba*, and in her muff was concealed a small dynamite bomb capable of enormous destruction.

Her uncle greeted her with the utmost simplicity and affection. He was a short, grey-haired man between fifty and sixty, with

a thick grey moustache and kind blue eyes. He was a widower and had no children. He took her into his sitting-room.

"My dear little Irina," he said, kissing her on both cheeks, "it is years since I've seen you; I should not have recognised you, you've grown into such a lovely grown-up creature. It is lucky that I have been appointed here, just on your way to X. (the country estate of Irina's relations), but why did you go to the hotel? Another time you must stay here. And mind, I expect to see you often now; you must stop here every time you go to X. There is always plenty of room in this old barrack of a house. But come, we will go and have something to eat." And he took her into the dining-room. "We shall be quite alone," he said. "It is better, isn't it? When you were a little girl, when we were all at X. together, you used to love pancakes; you never could have enough; so I've had some made to-day. And my cook understands how to make them properly."

Irina blurted out a few confused phrases. Her uncle could not get over the fact that she was grown up; that she was a tall and pretty

girl. He took her to the window to observe her properly, and he kept on making exclamations of admiration and surprise. Then he led her to the sideboard, and chose out for her titbits among the hot and cold *zabouski* (hors-d'oeuvre) that were there.

"It does one good," he said, "to see a face like yours in this detestable hole. I can't tell you what a life it is. One never has a moment's peace, and nobody is satisfied. There are fifteen or sixteen different parties in the town, all quarrelling. I have to settle everything. There are Revolutionaries, Social Democrats, Social Revolutionaries, Maximalists, Minimalists, merchants, students, Jews, anti-Jews, Reactionaries, the Alliance of the Russian People—all fighting against each other, and all appealing to me to settle their difficulties; and if one does manage to keep things smooth, what thanks does one get from the Government? Absolutely none. The other day all the Reactionaries, the Alliance of the Russian People, and so forth, met together and sang the National Hymn and collected a crowd of hooligans, and went to set fire to the school. I had to go down and make a speech

to them, and it was with the greatest difficulty I got them away.

"Then the other day there was a man called Savin, who was arrested for making revolutionary propaganda among the troops. He sent and appealed to me to be allowed to go and see his son, who, he said, was dying of scarlet fever. I gave him permission, and it turned out that the son had not got scarlet fever at all; that the whole thing was a pretext; and he took advantage of the occasion to shoot a policeman and to get away. The result of this is that the Reactionaries here say I am a Revolutionary, and, of course, the Revolutionaries say I'm a satrap and a brutal oppressor, and all the rest of it. But it doesn't matter what one does, it is impossible to satisfy any one. And every day I receive threatening letters from both sides: letters from people telling me I am a traitor to my country, that I am sold to the Jews and in league with England and all the Continental finance; and others saying that I am an executioner, and the enemy of freedom and of light. However, why should I bore you with all these stories? Let's talk of more cheerful things."

They sat down at the table.

"Here are the pancakes," he said. "The country is turned upside down, but we have to go on eating pancakes just the same, don't we? The best thing is not to think at all in times like this."

Irina looked at him and smiled; she found it difficult to speak. But he did not give her much opportunity, for he went on gaily, talking first about one thing, then about another—of the coming elections, of the plays that were being acted in St. Petersburg and Moscow, of the modern literature and its hysterical tendencies; and he told many amusing anecdotes illustrating the strange anomalies and the curious ideas that were rife in the present condition of things.

When they had finished eating, he said: "Now, you must come into my own sitting-room, where no one is allowed to disturb me, and I will have at least a half-hour of human intercourse before I go back to my convict's existence; because, you know, my dear, a Governor's life is worse than a convict's. At least, a convict does not have to make up his mind twenty hundred times a day

about questions which cannot be solved at all."

He led her into his sitting-room, which was as simply furnished as possible: it contained a large writing-table and a low divan; the carpets had holes in them; there was a gramophone and a small piano.

"That gramophone," he said, "is my one consolation. When I am tired I turn it on and listen to gipsy songs and to Caruso." He hummed a tune from an Italian opera. "It's a beautiful gramophone; you must hear it," and he fixed a Caruso record on it which sang a song from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. When this was over he talked on for about twenty minutes, of the memories of his youth, of his travels, and many trifling episodes concerning their common relations and acquaintances. Presently he looked at his watch. "My time is really up," he said, "and now I want to talk to you seriously. You know, Irina, I am alone in the world, and you have got no parents either; so that in a kind of way I look upon myself as your father, and I want you to treat me like a father. I want you to come here whenever you like and to confide in me if ever you have

anything that troubles you in any way. And I will always be ready to do anything I can for you; because, you know, little Irina, I am very, very fond of you. And now, I'm afraid my time is up, and I must go back to my work."

He kissed her on both cheeks, and made the sign of the cross on her face. "God bless you," he said.

Irina left the house, and the General rang for his aide-de-camp and settled down to his work.

Ten minutes later a loud explosion was heard in the street where the hotel was situated at which Irina had stopped. She had thrown her bomb, but the street was empty at the time, and she had killed no one save herself.

A POLICE OFFICER

IT was the fourth day of the armed rising in Moscow. Early in the morning some of the shops had opened, especially the tobacconists, and there had been a certain amount of movement in the streets; but later on, towards noon, a stillness had again descended on the city. From the centre of the town came the noise of artillery, and in the side streets one heard a ceaseless clicking of firing, though one could not tell whence it came or where it was going on.

At half-past six in the evening, when Alexander Petrovitch Pavlov, a police officer, went home to dinner, all the city seemed empty, quiet and deserted, yet at the same time full of an intermittent, unwonted noise. He went down the Square from the Governor's house where he had had business, past the Hotel Dresden, and stopped to say a few words to

the policeman there on duty. The policeman, in reply to some question he had vaguely asked (for Alexander Petrovitch was tired, sick of the whole business and discouraged by what seemed to him to be a tissue of absurdities), said: "They are fools, little fools—nothing will come of it." He did not pay much attention to this; he was thinking how absurd the whole matter was, and what a nuisance these abnormal upheavings were when they were prolonged.

Alexander Petrovitch was a man about forty years of age. He had been an officer in an infantry regiment and had once been a man of considerable means, but he had lost all his money quite suddenly playing cards. He had been fond of adventure, and had even taken part in foreign wars in Cuba, in Greece, and in China. Then he married. He did this as he had done everything else, suddenly and impulsively. He married the daughter of a landowner whom he met in a provincial town, and he married her after three days' acquaintance. His wife was good-looking and prided herself on her European culture; she spoke French and English. They had two children. It was

after his marriage that he had lost his money, and shortly before the war. When the war broke out he went to Manchuria. He was wounded at the battle of Mukden and promoted to be a captain; he also received two orders. After Mukden he was invalided home and some influential person who had met him in the Far East obtained for him a place in the police at Moscow, for which he received good pay. He was what is called in Russian a "Pristav"; that is to say, the police officer of a town district. His wife considered that this position was an inferior one; she was humiliated by it. She also considered her husband to be beneath her in social rank (which was in reality absurd) and she constantly reminded him of the fact. Alexander Petrovitch was quick-witted, good-natured, impulsive, but hopelessly incapable of any prolonged effort or any sort of concentration or fixity of purpose. His mind continually went off at a tangent, and as a Russian proverb says, "there was no Tsar in his head."

When the Manifesto of the 17th of October had been published he had greeted it with enthusiasm, and had taken part in the proces-

sions which had filled the streets that day, and the crowds that sang the "Marseillaise" and "God Save the Emperor," alternately, and displayed together the red and the National flag. But now he was discouraged. His innate scepticism and his pessimism which every now and then gave way to fitful outbursts of enthusiasm, had once more got the upper hand, and he muttered as he walked home through the snowy streets on that grey evening: "What a beastly state of things! What a beastly state of things!"

When we got home he saw at a glance that his wife was not in the best of tempers.

"Late as usual!" she said. "The soup's been standing twenty minutes and it's quite cold."

"I'm very sorry," he said; "I was kept at the Governor's." He sat down to the table on which there were a few sardines in a broken saucer, a little stale pickled caviare which had got hard and slightly grey, and some slices of sausage no longer fresh. He gulped down three small glasses of vodka.

"What about Ermolov?" asked his wife.

"He has been arrested," said Alexander

Petrovitch. "He will be examined by the doctors."

"What nonsense!" said his wife, "why should he be examined? Why should he be arrested? I think he ought to be rewarded. They don't care who they kill; they shoot policemen round the corner; they profit by the red cross uniform to kill the police; they were shooting from some of the churches to-day."

Ermolov was a high police official who had walked into a doctor's house the day before and had shot him with a pistol for no reason at all.

Alexander Petrovitch shrugged his shoulders. "It's the Government's fault," he said. "There is no order and no law anywhere. Protection is everything. What does it matter what the Revolutionaries do? That has nothing to do with the question. If an officer breaks the law he ought to be punished. He won't be punished because he's got protection. Besides which, Ermolov is not a normal man: he is mad, quite mad."

"What I say is," said his wife, "that men who pretend to be doctors and use the protection of the red cross badges to shoot innocent

policemen in the streets, ought to be shot in the street at sight."

"The whole thing is absurd!" said Alexander Petrovitch.

"What did I tell you?" said his wife; "I told you so from the very first when the Manifesto was published. I said that nothing would come of it, and that it was a mistake. What do we want with a Constitution in Russia? It is all the Jews—all this chaos is the work of the Jews. And look what is happening now. One cannot even go out into the streets for fear of being shot. They killed the Schwetzar (the hall porter) next door this morning; he had been sent on a message."

"If people would stay at home and mind their own business," said Alexander Petrovitch, "they would be quite safe. All day long I have been pestered by people who want to pass here and want to pass there; and they know quite well they can't. And it's no good telling them 'Don't go there, it's dangerous; don't go there, you'll be shot,' because the moment you tell them that, they make a point of going there at once. I'm sick of always saying the

same thing. If they go out in the streets they must expect to be killed."

"These students and these Jews," said his wife, "come and shoot you round the corner. I always said this would be the end of it. I always said no good would come of it. It is disgraceful!"

Alexander Petrovitch settled down to his dinner, and, putting a napkin under his chin, began to eat the soup, but it was cold and he had no appetite.

"Where are the children?" he said.

"They've had their dinner," said his wife. "Kolia and Peter are reading in the next room."

Alexander Petrovitch called his children, and two little boys came into the room. Kolia, a fair-haired, pasty-faced boy with large grey eyes, was aged nine, and Peter, a fat, dark-haired little creature in a sailor's suit was aged seven. Peter climbed on to his father's knee and his father asked him what he had been doing.

"We've been making bombs with the snow," said Peter; "and playing at the Revolution. Kolia was a policeman and I was a Social

Democrat, and I made a bomb and threw it at him and killed him."

"How dare you play such games?" said their mother—"that's all your fault," she added to her husband; "it's you who have put such ideas into their heads. Heaven knows when children begin to get such ideas; I think the end of the world is come. Look at our schools: the children can't read; the universities are all in the hands of the Jews. The girls at school have all gone quite mad. Nothing but hysteria, hysteria, hysteria! It's a disgrace. Don't let me ever hear of your playing such games again," she said to the children.

The children, used to perpetual scolding, said nothing. Alexander Petrovitch laughed.

"At least, I hope," said his wife, "that the result of all this, and of your having to do all this extra work, will be that you will get promotion."

"I doubt it," said Alexander Petrovitch. "I have got no protection, and protection is everything. I have finished my dinner. I want some tea."

His wife called Sasha, the maid, and told

her to bring the samovar, and then scolded her violently because it was not ready. She then made a further scene about the way in which the lemon was cut. Finally the samovar was brought, Alexander Petrovitch was given his tea and began smoking cigarette after cigarette in gloomy silence. His wife sat at the head of the table and said nothing. The children played in the corner with some wooden soldiers, and every now and then a dull boom was heard outside, and once or twice the window shook and rattled.

"Guns!" said Alexander Petrovitch. "They are firing in the Tverskaia, I suppose."

At that moment the bell rang.

"I think," said Alexander Petrovitch's wife, "that it must be Ivan Ivanovitch; he said he would come round this evening if he could."

"I shall have to go presently," said Alexander Petrovitch; "I've got to go back to the office."

Then the door was opened, and seven or eight people walked into the room. They were young schoolboys and students between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, and there were two girls with them.

Alexander Petrovitch and his wife were surprised at this influx of guests, and the children stood up in the corner and stared.

"Whom have I the honour to address and what can I do for you?" said Alexander Petrovitch.

A young student with long black hair, a seedy overcoat, and a worn fur cap appeared to be the spokesman of the group, and, taking off his cap, said: "We are the representatives of the flying column of the Social Revolutionaries. We have come to carry out our orders."

Alexander Petrovitch's wife stood up and turned pale. The schoolboys and the students surrounded Alexander Petrovitch and, linking their arms in his, forced him out of the room. He turned round and looked at his wife and the children. "I thought as much!" he said. Then he was pushed out of the room and down the staircase.

All this happened in a moment. His wife stood still as though transfixed, and could not move or utter.

Two or three minutes passed in breathless silence, and Peter began to cry. They had

left the door open. The banging of the street door was heard, and then two or three shots rang out.

Sasha, the maid, came rushing into the room, screaming with all her might—

"They have killed Alexander Petrovitch in the yard!"

THE AMORPHISTS

I WAS staying not long ago in a small town in the centre of Russia which I will call T——. It was a small, sleepy town, through which an indolent river wended its way. The houses were low, one-storeyed, built of wood and painted white, adorned with old-fashioned delicate stucco, delicate pilasters and wooden verandahs; and many of them had gardens and trellis-work arbours. The place breathed a spirit of the dying eighteenth century. One seemed to be in a kind of Russian "Cranford." The shops and market-places, the hotel with its stiff early Victorian furniture—mahogany, stuffed with faded red rep—the squatting churches, the slow moving, leisurely inhabitants, all seemed to belong to a remoter time than ours. Here, I thought, in any case, the Revolution cannot have penetrated; to seek for politics here would be like looking

for bombs in the Garden of Proserpine. But when I was waiting for my dinner in the dining-room of the hotel, when the great mechanical barrel-organ had played a tune by Donizetti out of *Lucrezia Borgia* for the tenth time, I was disillusioned by the innkeeper, a fat, smiling man, with a huge beard, high boots, and a loose, white untucked shirt, with a red corded waistband round it.

"Here," I said to him, "you have in any case the advantage of being free from revolutionary turmoil."

"How so?" he asked, in a slightly injured tone, which was due to the fact, not that I had suspected his native city of being anti-revolutionary, but of being void of teeming events.

"We, too, have our disorders, very serious disorders," he said, with pride. "The day before yesterday there were terrible occurrences."

"Really," I answered, with great interest, "what were they?"

"Is it possible that you have not heard," he asked. "Why, everybody knows that the

day before yesterday the Amorphists made an attempt."

I confessed that I had not heard of it, because I had been very busy, and I pressed him to relate to me the proceedings of the Amorphists, adding that I was not quite sure who the Amorphists were.

"Everybody knows," said my host, "that the Amorphists are the extreme left wing of the Free Law Party. They are to the left of all left parties, which run thus: Social Revolutionaries, Maximalists, Anarchists, Amorphists."

"But what are the Free Law Party?" I asked.

"The Free Law Party," he answered, "are those people who wish the law to be free."

"How free?" I asked.

"Free Law," he answered, "is like free trade. In some countries there is free trade. We wish for free law; everybody to be free to make whatever laws he likes, and everybody else to be free to obey them."

"And to disobey them?" I asked.

"Yes, of course, and to disobey them. Well, I will tell you what happened. The

Amorphists—that is to say the left wing of the Free Law Party—were getting discontented at the inactivity of the rest of their party"——

"What are Amorphists?" I interrupted.

"It is a secret," he answered, "but I will tell you this; nobody can be an Amorphist who recognises any law or rule, and nobody can be an Amorphist who is more than seventeen years of age. They have no President, for every Amorphist is a President. Their watchword is, 'Death to the Bourgoisie; away with the intellectuals; down with the students; to hell with the Jews; Life, Liberty, Anarchy; Death.' They wear a sign nobody can recognise unless he is initiated, and whoever betrays it is condemned to be drowned on dry land, like a Catholic Freemason."

"What are those?" I asked.

"Freemasons," he replied—he had now become used, and consequently indulgent to my ignorance—"are those people who drink each other's healths in water. Well, as I was saying, the Amorphists who constituted the left wing of the Free Law Party were discontented with the apathy of the rest of their

colleagues, and they decided that this state of things could not last any longer, and that they must make themselves felt; so they decided to kill Michael Ivanovitch."

"Who," I asked, "is Michael Ivanovitch?"

The innkeeper's astonishment knew no bounds. My not having heard of the Amorphists, of free law, or freemasons, he quite understood, but Michael Ivanovitch! That was too much. Everybody knew Michael Ivanovitch. "He is the assistant of the Police Inspector," he said, with an air of patient pity. "They settled to kill him. Lots were drawn, and Vasili, Paul, and Trafim were chosen to kill him—Vasili the floor-cleaner, Paul the stone-mason, and Trafim the stove-maker." (He now gave explanations unasked, as one does to small children.) "So Vasili, Paul, and Trafim went off to buy a bomb at the Apothecary's opposite—he is cunning in the making of bombs. They bought a bomb, and they then went to make the attempt. Vasili and Paul were chosen to act, Trafim was to keep guard. It was he who told the story afterwards. They went and sat on a seat in the big street here (it was

quite deserted at this hour), along which they knew Michael Ivanovitch would pass at five minutes to six, since he passed that way every night on his way to dinner. But Heaven knows why! Michael Ivanovitch was late; it was cold, dark, and drizzly, a fine rain was falling, and on Paul, Vasili, and Trafim, as they waited, a great tediousness descended. At last Paul asked Vasili if he had ever been to the Circus. Vasili said he had never been to the Circus. Paul said Vasili knew nothing of anything, and that he for his part had been to the Circus often, and that it was a fine sight. There was a maiden, beautiful as the day, glittering with spangles, who stood on a horse, and leapt through a paper hoop, and alighted once more on the horse. Then there was a Chinaman, a real Chinaman with a big pigtail, who spun a pail of water on his finger. There was also a clown who threw a great golden ball into the air and caught it on his nose as easily as a trout catches a fly. 'Yes,' said Vasili, 'I know how that is done; I can do it myself. You throw the ball up like this,' and he made a gesture. 'Fool!' said Paul, 'thou knowest nothing at all. May the soul of thy mother be vexed!

He does it like this,' and suiting the action to the word he lightly threw the bomb which he was holding in his left hand into the air. The bomb exploded, Paul was blown to bits, and Vasili was left a mangled heap.

"Trafim, who was only wounded, was very angry, and after taking from the mangled corpse of Vasili a Browning pistol, saying, 'It is no use wasting twenty-four roubles,' he went straight to the Apothecary who had sold him the bomb. 'Scoundrel,' he said, 'what sort of goods do you sell? And you even dared to boast. Melinite! Melinite! Here is Melinite for you! It goes off before it is meant to. You do not know how to make a simple bomb. Cheat! Rascal!'

"'Who says I don't know how to make bombs?' said the Apothecary, wounded in his professional pride.

"'I say so,' said Trafim. 'The bomb you sold us yesterday went off of its own accord. It was worth nothing at all. May the soul of thy mother be annoyed, you yellow-eyed Arcadia!'"

"What is an Arcadia?" I asked.

"An Arcadia is the same as a Cholera," he answered.

"'You say I am a yellow-eyed Arcadia,' he continued, 'and you are a yellow-eyed Arcadia yourself. You say I cannot make bombs! Look at this!' and he produced a bomb from a drawer, and banged it down on the counter. The bomb went off, the shop was wrecked, the assistant of the Apothecary was killed; Trafim was blown through the window and wounded; but the Apothecary, who came off with a scratch, smiled triumphantly amidst the wreckage, and said, 'Who says I do not know how to make bombs? Yellow-eyed Arcadia, indeed!'

"Now a large crowd had gathered outside, attracted by the noise; a policeman came, and every one said something must be done. 'Send for the Chief of the Police,' they cried. But the policeman began to cry and said he was a family man; and at last Peter Alexandrovitch, merchant, went and fetched the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police said he could not act without orders, and went to the Prefect. The Prefect telephoned for orders to the Governor, who telephoned back that the Apothecary's house must be searched, and any bombs and weapons found there must be taken instantly

to the Police Station. The Chief of Police came back with the news, and told the policeman to search the Apothecary's house, for only the shop had been damaged. But the policeman said, 'For the sake of Heaven, have mercy on a family man.' The Chief of Police appealed to the crowd for a patriotic volunteer, but the crowd began at once to melt away.

"'It is not our business,' at last he said, 'it is the Electrotechnician's business; send for the Electrotechnician.' No sooner said than done. People rushed to fetch the Electrotechnician. He soon arrived, and was told what to do. 'All right,' he said. 'These bombs are Melinite; give me five hundred roubles, and I will bring them out.' The police said, 'We have no such sum.' Nevertheless, in an hour's time the money was found, and by evening a basketful of bombs was carefully carried by the terrified policemen to the Police Station. Here the bombs were left, and yesterday the Governor drove to the Police Station with an engineer, who examined the bombs; he found that all the explosive had been taken out, and that they were filled with cotton wool."

"Who did that?" I asked.

"Why, the Electrotechnician, of course," said the innkeeper. "Do you not know he is the Honorary Vice-President of Amorphists?"

"And was he arrested?" I asked.

"Heaven be with him, no," said the innkeeper. He was thanked by the Governor in person."

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN RUSSIA

THE STORY OF A SKAT SCORING BOOK

(With apologies to Sir A. Conan Doyle)

IT was in November 1907 that I went to Moscow to meet Sherlock Holmes, who was returning via Kiachta by the Trans-Siberian Railway from Afghanistan, where rumour said he was connected with certain not altogether official negotiations between the British Government and the Ameer of Afghanistan. During his return journey, Holmes, indefatigable as usual, had enabled the Russian police to lay hands at Irkutsk on the ringleaders of a daring revolutionary band who were plotting to kidnap the Emperor of Russia. So much I had gathered from a laconic post card dated Ufa, in which he also requested me to meet him at Moscow on the 20th of November. When, however, I arrived at Moscow, I found the following telegram awaiting me :—

"Take night train town O——; government Z——; meet you station; prospect excellent sport; bring furs."

To any one acquainted with Sherlock Holmes' methods and habits this seemed to signify that his ever-restless brain was once more on the scent of some thrilling mystery or some baffling crime. After spending the day at Moscow, I took the night train, as directed, and I arrived the next morning at O——. I found my friend awaiting me at the station, muffled in a thick shouba, and smoking a pipe of more than usually strong tobacco.

"I hope you have brought a warm coat, Watson," was his greeting; "we have got a thirty-mile drive before us;" and giving orders to a porter to carry my bag, in Russian, which he spoke fluently, he led the way through the station to where a sledge drawn by three horses, harnessed abreast, awaited us.

"Jump in," he said, "we have no time to lose. We are driving," he continued, as we made ourselves comfortable in the straw and wrapped ourselves up with a thick fur rug, "to the property of Prince B——, whose acquaintance I made in Transbaikalia, and who invited me

to stay with him for a few days' wolf shooting. The Prince is expecting you." During the first half-hour of the drive Holmes discoursed learnedly on old violins and Elzevir editions, interrupting his discourse to point out from time to time the effects of light on the snowy plain, or to make some pregnant comment on the manners and customs of the villagers whom we passed. Then, when we had driven for about half an hour, he said, "You will now oblige me, Watson, by not talking to me until we arrive at our destination. I am engaged in following a train of speculation which requires all my attention."

Knowing my friend's habits I showed neither surprise nor annoyance, and it was not long before I fell into a deep sleep.

When I awoke we had reached the property of Prince B——. Prince B——'s home was situated at a stone's-throw from a long straggling village composed of log-built huts, and now mantled in a thick covering of snow.

The houses, for there were two, were situated in the midst of a garden plentifully wooded with pine trees and Siberian firs. The houses were separate, although close to each other;

both of them were two-storeyed, the first, at which the horses pulled up, being built of wood painted red, the second, and farther one, of white bricks.

"You have already been here two or three days?" I ventured to ask, as we drove through the garden gate.

"Watson, you are incorrigible," replied Holmes. "Had you observed the name of the station whence my message was despatched you would have known that I myself arrived this morning from the town of A——, which a glance at the map would have shown you is a twelve hours' journey from O——. This is the first time I have the pleasure of enjoying the Prince's hospitality, and when the Prince invited me he begged me, if possible, to persuade you to accompany me. I am glad you have come, for who knows but that I may need your assistance before long."

I could not help thinking that the reproach was in this case scarcely justified, since, being entirely ignorant of the Russian language, I could not be expected to decipher the name of a telegraph station, but I merely replied: "You

have at present no immediate problem on hand?"

"Watson," said Holmes, as we reached the front door, "every fresh human being we meet is a possible problem."

We were met and warmly welcomed by the Prince, and after we had been shown to our rooms, which were in the further stone house, we were conducted to the drawing-room in the wooden house, where the Prince and his family awaited us. The Prince was a middle-aged man with silver-grey hair and mild grey eyes; he wore a grey undress military tunic, and Holmes remarked, as we washed our hands upstairs, that he supposed I had already noticed the Prince was a general adjutant of the Emperor's suite; that he had served in Turkestan before he had been in the Far East; that he was at present suffering from a slight toothache; and that he had been on two big game expeditions in Africa. I confessed that all this had escaped me, and Holmes said that he hadn't time to detail to me the links of the chain, but if I would glance at the Prince's uniform, the spots on his forehead, the iodoform stain on his upper lip, and the antelope horns

in the front hall, with their respective dates, perhaps all would be clear to me. The Prince's family consisted of his wife, his eldest son, and his daughter. The Princess was a dark, thin, young-looking woman, with large grey eyes, and the son, Prince Alexander, a tall, dark young man of about twenty-three, dressed in an ordinary tweed shooting suit; the daughter, Princess Barbara, was a girl of nineteen, very fair, with blue eyes. The whole family talked English with the greatest fluency.

As soon as the Prince had presented us to his family, he led us into the dining-room, where lunch awaited us.

"You have been having a busy morning practising the flute," said Holmes to Prince Alexander. "I hope we may have the pleasure of playing some duets together. I have brought my violin with me."

"Yes, I have been playing this morning," answered the young man; then he paused in amazement, and added, "But how on earth did you— You couldn't have seen my flute, because it's in my room."

"Your forefinger, my dear sir," answered Holmes, "has the dent which is peculiar to

flute players; that you have been playing this morning I concluded from the fact that you have not been out of doors, and that the music —music for piano and flute—on the drawing-room piano had been evidently quite recently ransacked by some one in a hurry to find a particular piece of music."

"Your reputation does scant justice to your powers," answered the young man; "but I doubt if you can guess what my sister has been doing all the morning."

"I never guess," answered Holmes; "but the problem is an extraordinarily simple one. The Princess has been occupied in making green pottery, and this morning has fired a kiln."

"It's quite true; how could you know it?" said the young Princess.

"In the drawing-room," answered Sherlock Holmes, "I could not help noticing a certain tray. On this tray were a quantity of small green pots which were evidently just finished, and had, moreover, that particular grace peculiar to an amateur's work. Your left hand, Princess, you will observe, is faintly tinged with red lead glaze, your cheeks are slightly flushed, and I

noticed as you entered the room the smell of smoke which necessarily clings to a person who has been standing all the morning close to a kiln. You see how childishly simple are my methods." The Prince and his family expressed surprise and delight. During the rest of luncheon Holmes kept his guests delighted with his varied knowledge.

As soon as luncheon was over we repaired to the drawing-room, in a corner of which an open card table had been placed.

"We always play cards after luncheon," said the Prince; "I hope you and Mr. Watson will join us. It is no use telling you, Mr. Holmes," he added, as he stuffed tobacco into a long cherry-wood pipe, "what game we play, because I am sure you know already, only I shall be curious to see how you arrived at the knowledge."

"Certainly," said Holmes; "it is true I have drawn certain conclusions, but I dare say I am mistaken. I exclude bridge, vindt, whist, and all kindred games, because your packs are obviously not full packs. I know, on the other hand, that more than two play, for you said *we*, and asked me and Watson to join you.

I exclude piquet, therefore, and all kindred games. There remain préférence and the national German game, skat. As your nephew, who has been on a recent visit here, is studying at Heidelberg, I concluded that he had introduced the game of skat, of which German students are exceedingly fond, to you."

"Perfectly correct," said the young Prince; "but how did you know I had a cousin, and that he was at Heidelberg?"

"The photograph of a young student in the dress of the Saxo Berussen Korps, which is in my bedroom, and the group of students, both signed Fritz von Interlacken, dated October 1907, told me that a student had been here recently; the inscription on the bowl of your pipe, Prince, 'Fritz, S.L., Onkel Peter, July 1907,' told me the rest."

"Wonderful," said the Prince; "and how simple it seems when one is told; but will you and Watson join us and cut?"

"Watson," said Holmes, "plays nothing but whist, and I, although I know the principles of many card games, am an indifferent player in practice."

"Papa," broke in the young Princess, "the skat-book has gone."

"Ring," said the Prince. "We are new to the game," he added, "and a small book, which contains the rules, and is, moreover, a scoring book, is of great assistance to us." The butler entered the room, and declared that Prince Alexander took the book every evening to his room in the other house, and left it in the front hall in the morning."

"I take it to learn the rules," said Prince Alexander, "but I always bring it back."

"You can look in my room," he added, to the butler, "but I know it isn't there." The butler went out.

"Did you bring it back this morning?" asked his father.

"I didn't take it away last night. It was on the table, and I think I left the money I won in it, nine roubles in paper."

"Then," said the Prince, laughing, "this is a matter for Mr. Holmes, and, by the way, we forgot to tell him, at least I didn't forget, but I purposely didn't mention it at luncheon, that last night we had a robbery here."

"Indeed," said Holmes, folding his hands and looking up to the ceiling, "you interest me extremely."

"I'm afraid it's not very interesting," said the Princess, "but, it's rather comical. Our four best kitchen saucepans have been stolen, two or three of the Prince's shirts, two or three of Alexander's, and some inexpensive silver links belonging to him."

"Would you like me to try and find the thief?" asked Holmes.

"We would be delighted if you could find the kitchen saucepans," said the Princess, "as it is inconvenient for the cook. It doesn't matter about the thief."

"Do you give me leave to cross-examine the members of your household and your servants?" asked Holmes.

"Of course," said the Princess, "we know it is no one in the house, but we have several bad characters in the village."

The butler now entered once more, and said that he had searched everywhere in both houses and the book was nowhere to be found.

"Then we must play without it," said the Princess. "Alexander, get some paper to

score on; the book," she added, "was most convenient, as it had blank leaves at the end, perforated at the edge, which one could tear off for the score. And one saw the score at a glance. You won't play, Mr. Holmes?"

"I prefer to look on," said Holmes, and when I had likewise declined to play, the Prince and the Princess and Princess Barbara sat down at the table. Prince Alexander also declined to play, on the ground that he was too busy.

"As you are not going to play, Prince Alexander," said Holmes, "perhaps you will help me presently to conduct my preliminary investigations."

"Certainly," said the young prince.

"Nobody can possibly have stolen the skat-book, in any case," said the Princess.

"I'm not so sure," said Prince Alexander, "if I left my money in it, as I think I did."

Holmes took no notice of this remark, but after he had watched three games in perfect silence he suddenly addressed the Princess: "You said you had several bad characters in the village; is there any one whom you would

particularly suspect? Who, for instance, is the worst character?"

"There are several in the village," said the Princess; "and one of the clerks in our office—what we call the 'Kontora'—an educated man, is suspected of carrying on social revolutionary propaganda, but there is no evidence against him. They say, too, that he steals—only not saucepans."

"Yes, but that's all rubbish," said the young Prince. "He's an honest, hard-working man."

"Why don't you send him away?" asked Holmes.

"Oh, he would burn our house!" said the Princess, laughing. "Besides, he's quite harmless."

"Most interesting," said Holmes. "And can I see this gentleman?"

"Oh, certainly," said the Princess. "Alexander will take you to the Kontora."

"Let us go to the other house," said the young Prince to Holmes, "and you can begin your investigations. It will be great fun."

"May Watson come too?" asked Holmes.

"Of course," said the young Prince; "the investigations would have no value without Dr. Watson's presence."

"Before we do anything else," said Holmes, "will you show me the kitchen, and we will solve the question of the saucepans?" The kitchen was in a building by itself, separate from both houses, and situated on an elevation beyond the further stone house, in which were our rooms and that of the young Prince. We went there, and the white-frocked Parisian cook explained in precise phrases exactly what had disappeared, ending up his narrative with an exclamation of disgust. Sherlock Holmes was soon on all fours beneath the kitchen window. He examined the wall, the window-sill, and the ground, with a strong magnifying glass; then, like a hound following a strong scent, he walked swiftly from the kitchen into the garden, and stopped before a heap of snow beside a clump of trees. "If we could have a spade"—a spade was soon brought, and Holmes, after a few vigorous strokes, revealed to the astonished gaze of the Prince, the cook, and a crowd of moujiks, four large kitchen saucepans. "Now," said Holmes to the young Prince, "I will continue the investigations, if you permit it, in your room." And we went into the stone house together.

As we entered the house, a young man approached the Prince and said a few words to him; he wore top-boots, long hair, a dark blue sarsenet shirt without a collar, buttoned at the side, a pince-nez, a black jacket, and an astrakhan cap.

The Prince said something to this man in Russian, and led us into a room on the ground floor adjoining his own sitting-room, saying: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Holmes, but do you mind waiting here one moment? I have to speak to a man on business; it is a matter of a few minutes only."

The Prince then went into his sitting-room, which was connected with the room in which we were by a door; the door was ajar, and appeared, indeed, to be one of those doors which never shut, so that fragments of the conversation which took place between the Prince and the young man were audible. They were, of course, speaking Russian.

Holmes lit a pipe and sat down on a divan; presently one of the voices next door sank to a whisper, and the opening and shutting of a drawer were heard. Then the young man took his departure, and the Prince, opening

the door, invited us into his room. "Please sit down," he said, pointing to a divan, and he himself took a seat at a writing-table which was placed sideways in the middle of the room. "Now that we have found the saucepans, I suppose all further investigations are needless, Mr. Holmes?" he said.

"We have not yet found the thief," replied Holmes.

"That, I am afraid, will be more difficult," said the Prince.

"Nor have we found your skat-scoring book," said Holmes.

"Oh, that's sure to turn up!" said the Prince. "I will send for the maid who cleans our rooms and you can examine her. She is an old peasant woman who has been with us ever since I have been born," and saying this the Prince went to the door and shouted, "Mavra!"

An elderly woman dressed in a peasant's dress, consisting of a blue cotton petticoat and a large apron, and a black handkerchief over her head, entered the room, and smilingly greeted the company. What followed I was unable to understand, but Holmes later in the afternoon dictated to me at my request

what took place in detail. The Prince asked Holmes to examine her, and Holmes did not allude to the saucepans, but asked her whether she had seen a small green book anywhere.

She said she had seen it, she had seen it every day. It was there.

"In the other house?" asked Holmes.

"Yes, in the other house," she answered.

"Did you see it yesterday?"

"Yes, yesterday it was lying *there*."

"In this house?" asked Holmes.

"Yes," she replied. "There."

"Somebody said," interrupted the Prince, "that some books were left on the window-sill upstairs in this house, and that they had got wet and had been taken to be dried?"

"Yes," said Mavra, smiling cheerfully, "they say some books got wet and were taken to be dried."

"Where?" asked Holmes.

"They were lying *there*. And then to-day I said to Masha: 'Where are those books?' And she said: 'What have I got to do with books, and what have you got to do with books?"

"In this house?"

'Yes, *there*."

'Who dried them?" asked Holmes.

"I cannot know," she answered; "perhaps André knows."

"Who is André?" asked Holmes.

"The night watchman," answered the young Prince.

"And after the books were dried did you see them?" asked Holmes.

"Yes," she answered.

"Where?" he asked.

"They were lying *there*," she replied.

"In the other house?"

"Yes, *there*."

At that moment the butler entered, and the Prince asked him whether the skat-book or any other books had got wet from being left on the window-sill and had been dried. He replied that there were two books on the window-sill upstairs; they were still there, but nobody had dried them, because they had never been wet, and the skat-book was not among them. The young Prince repeated that they had played skat the preceding evening and had used the scoring book, which had been left on the drawing-room table.

"Thank you," said Holmes to the maid. "That is quite sufficient for the present. I should now like, if possible, to go to your office." "Certainly," said the Prince, "let us go." We walked down to the office, which was about five minutes' walk from the house, during which time Holmes carried on an animated conversation with the Prince on the political situation in Russia. We reached the office, and entered into a bare room, furnished with a stove and a writing-table, where we found two clerks at work. One of the clerks was the young man whom the Prince had just interviewed. "Which is the gentleman you mentioned?" asked Holmes in an aside to the Prince. "The man with a blue shirt," replied the Prince: "would you like to examine him?" "No thank you," replied Holmes. "I have seen all I wanted to see. I will now, if you permit me, go for a walk in the village by myself; I wish to think over a few things." We returned to the house, and Holmes set out by himself for the village. I went up to my room to take a nap, for I was still rather tired after the journey.

Holmes returned towards five o'clock in the

afternoon, and, settling himself in an arm-chair, he said: "If you care to hear, Watson, I will tell you the result of my investigations."

"If you found the thief," I said, "you deserve credit, for the vagueness of this family and the unconcern with which they regard this robbery appals me." "Very true," replied Holmes. "The matter was, as I had anticipated, far more complicated than appeared at first sight. It frequently happens that problems which appeared to consist of mere trifles turn out to be matters of deep importance and difficult of solution. In this case, what put me on the scent was the disappearance of the skat-book. It is obvious that a thief, whose object is money, would not steal such a thing. When I found the saucepans in the garden my supposition was confirmed. The theft was a blind."

"But there was money in the book," I interrupted; "and, besides, some shirts and a pair of links disappeared."

"I am coming to that presently," answered Holmes. "I concluded from the manner in which the saucepans had been stolen and hidden that the thief was no ordinary thief.

Further data in our possession told me that one of the clerks was under suspicion of carrying on revolutionary propaganda. The young Prince interviews him and receives from him a small cardboard box which he was carrying when we met him, a fact which you no doubt overlooked. He placed the box in a drawer which has no lock. (Note once more the vagueness and the carelessness of these people!) While the young Prince was interviewing the clerk I overheard a portion of their conversation, and I ascertained that the contents of the cardboard box consisted of bombs, and that it was proposed to bring about a *coup* to-morrow, which was to take place at the railway station."

"With what object?" I asked.

"We will come to that later," said Holmes. "Let us take things in their order. When we visited the office, I noticed that on the clerk's table lay a sheet of paper perforated at the edge, covered on one side with figures, and evidently torn from a card scoring book, for it had divisions and lines printed on it for scoring. When I returned from the office on my way to the village the young Prince

took me once more into his room, and by skilfully leading the conversation into a channel of argument (the young man is, you have noticed, argumentative) I finally made him a bet on the matter of a date, the settling of which made it necessary for him to fetch a book of reference; he went eagerly in search of a dictionary of biography, which I knew was in the other house, and once left alone I made two important discoveries. In one of his writing-table drawers I found a cardboard box containing four narrow bombs made of a high explosive, and in another drawer I found the silver links and nine roubles in paper which the young Prince said he had lost at cards last night. But more important still was my second discovery. I found several pages torn from a scoring book and covered with figures, which are not those which occur in skat or in any other game; and I also found on the edge of the fireplace a half-burnt piece of paper, torn from the same book, but, mark this, from the text of the book, and not a blank leaf perforated at the edge, likewise covered with figures. I then went to the village and had a notable conversation with the village policeman.

He furnished me with interesting information with regard to the inhabitants of the village and the political situation generally. When asked as to the clerk we saw to-day he said he was very 'red,' meaning revolutionary. He said the old Prince refused to send him away at the instigation of his son. The young Prince was also 'red,' he said, and this was the most dangerous feature in the situation. The policeman had no doubt that he communicated with the revolutionary party through the channel of the clerk.

"I questioned him as to the theft of the saucepans, and to my astonishment he said he knew quite well who had stolen them. I asked who. He said there was a man in the village formerly employed in the Prince's office who had once been sent to Siberia but who had returned. He was now a professional pick-pocket, and was enjoying a holiday. 'But if you know he did this why don't you arrest him?' I asked.

"'God be with him, no,' replied this astonished and astonishing policeman. 'Why arrest him? He has already been in prison once.'

"'What for?' I asked.

"'He killed the brother of the gamekeeper,' said the policeman, 'and he stole hens.' Of course I knew that he was lying, because a real thief would have taken the saucepans away, and had the policeman known him he would have arrested him. 'Does the Prince know this?' I asked. 'Of course he knows it,' answered the policeman. 'Then why does not he insist on his arrest?' I asked. 'The Prince has pity on us,' said the policeman. 'We are poor people. If he were arrested he would soon come back again and probably kill me; he would certainly burn my house. The Prince knows. What does it matter if he stole a few saucepans? The Prince will buy new ones. The Prince does not mind. He will do no further harm. He has come back to see his home and his native village.' Questioned as to whether the clerk was connected with the theft, the policeman laughed. He said the clerk was 'red,' and busied himself with politics, but was not a hooligan.

"I asked him if sufficient proof were found whether he would arrest the thief. 'May God forfend!' answered this amazing policeman. I also ascertained from him that a large sum of

money, about half a million roubles, will be transported from the town of O—— to the town of X—— to-morrow. Then I returned home.

"You now doubtless understand the object of the *coup*. It is to obtain money for the revolutionary funds, and the object of the theft of saucepans was to throw suspicion, when the *coup* should take place, on an indefinite band of robbers who would be supposed to be lurking in the neighbourhood.

"Now we come to further links in the chain. The young Prince, as you remember, was in the habit of taking the skat-scoring book every evening from the drawing-room in the wooden house to his sitting-room in this house, and of bringing it back every morning and leaving it in the front hall. Why did he do this; and why the front hall? I suppose that even you, Watson, have already concluded that the spurious thief of the saucepans and the leading spirit of this dark conspiracy is none other than the young Prince. He could not communicate openly with the clerk, nor see him too often without raising suspicion, so every evening he wrote what he had to say in cipher

on the blank leaves provided at the end of the book for scoring purposes, and left the book in a prominent place. The clerk called at the house on business matters and tore off a leaf from the book and left an answer in it, if he wished to do so."

"Most ingenious," I interrupted; "but why did the book disappear?"

"The Prince destroyed it. The scrap of burnt paper I found in the fireplace told me that; since it was not, as I told you, one of the blank leaves, but a page of the text of the book itself. The Prince being, like all the members of his family, as you yourself have observed, and like most Russian revolutionaries, excessively vague happy-go-lucky, had worked out his cipher all over the book, and as the *coup* is to come off to-morrow he thought it best to be on the safe side and to destroy a document which might possibly prove compromising. By the ingenious lie of the money left in it he included it in the robbery."

"And what steps have you taken?" I asked.

"I sent an express telegram, in cipher, to

my friend L—— of the Chief Department of the Police in St. Petersburg acquainting him of the facts."

"And what will be the result?" I asked.

"They will prevent the *coup* coming off—it was to be to-morrow evening," answered Holmes.

The bell now rang for tea, and during the rest of the evening the matter of the theft was only once or twice jokingly referred to. Holmes and the Prince appeared to think that as the saucepans had been found there was no further use bothering about the thief. After dinner, Holmes, the young Prince, and the young Princess delighted us with a trio for flute, violin and piano, and the time passed rapidly and pleasantly. I found it difficult to believe that the young man who was so carelessly and easily "entertaining" us was really a dangerous criminal on the eve of carrying out a gigantic *coup*; but my experience as Holmes' biographer has convinced me that such cases are, alas! only too frequent. The next morning I spent in writing letters, and Holmes did nothing but lie on the sofa and smoke a quantity of shag tobacco. We

all met once more at luncheon. After luncheon, as we were drinking our coffee in the drawing-room, the young Prince said he had an interesting communication to make to us, which was as follows: At the railway station there is a large wooden building made for storing corn. The merchants store their corn there, for which they receive a receipt stating the value of what is stored. If it is destroyed the Government is responsible for the amount.

Now it appeared that the stationmaster had arranged with one of the merchants to give him a duplicate receipt for an amount of corn worth an immense sum. He made out a false duplicate for this immense sum. It was further arranged that the merchant should deliver an infinitesimal quantity of corn, worth a few shillings, and that the corn storing-house should be set on fire and burnt. The stationmaster was to receive a handsome commission. But, as it was impossible to tamper with the books, owing to the number of officials employed, in which the amounts received were entered and kept at the station, it was likewise settled to burn the station and

thus destroy the compromising documents it contained, and render comparison between the false duplicate received by the merchant and the original receipt entered in the station books impossible. It was further settled to do the burning by means of bombs and to attribute the whole affair to the revolutionaries. The plot, however, had been discovered by the clerk in the Prince's office who was a friend of a new assistant stationmaster, and he had brought the bombs to the house and had told the whole story to the young Prince, who had immediately communicated with the Police Captain of the district in the town of O——. As he finished his story the young Prince added: "It shows what idiots our local police are, because they suspected this very clerk of being a revolutionary." Holmes' face remained impassive during the recital of this story, but I could not help feeling that my friend was somewhat anxious. "It was quite a problem in your line Mr. Holmes," said the Princess, "but I feel you have done enough for us in finding our saucepans, only I do wish we could find the scoring book." "I can't remember," said the young Prince,

"whether it was yesterday or the day before yesterday morning that the book was in my room. I remember tearing a leaf out of it, having no other paper handy, to write a receipt for the clerk who brought me some money from the Kontora. But there was no money in it, because I found the money I won last night, and the silver links also, in a drawer. So the book wasn't stolen."

"Has any one looked in the card table?" asked the young Princess. And as no one had looked there, a leaf of the card table was raised, and there lay a small green book—the skat scoring book. At that moment the butler entered the room endeavouring to master convulsions of laughter, and said that the village police-inspector, the Stanovoi, was outside saying he had received orders from St. Petersburg to arrest Prince Alexander and to send him immediately to the town of O—— for being implicated in an "expropriation" plot to rob the train. The whole family burst into fits of uncontrollable laughter, and the old Prince explained to Holmes that the police-inspector had probably made this idiotic

mistake on purpose, since he had twice been found poaching in their woods and that they had complained and asked for his removal.

Then together with his son he went and interviewed the police-inspector. They came back presently saying that the matter was an idiotic and inexplicable mistake connected with the affair of the station, but that the police-inspector, although he was well aware of this, owing to the grudge he bore the family insisted on carrying out his orders. So the young Prince had to leave for O—— that afternoon, amidst universal merriment, and he exhorted Holmes as he departed to obtain his release. We also left for Moscow the next day, whither Holmes said he had suddenly been summoned upon urgent business. When we arrived at Moscow we received a telegram saying that Prince Alexander had been immediately released with many apologies for the mistake, that the police-inspector had been dismissed from his post, and that the merchant and the station-master had been arrested. Holmes never referred to the matter again, nor does he like

any mention made of the game of skat. But it seems to me that this comparative failure only serves to heighten the brilliance of his many successes, and it is for this reason I have recorded it.

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